

# 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 [<https://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 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. In particular, you can also now find canyon condition reports from other canyons.

If you have any feedback, comments or corrections, you can send them to [website@ozultimate.com](mailto: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 They can become rapidly outdated.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 Coorongooaba area, or the lesser known regions north of those.

## MAP REFERENCES

Grid references in this guide are in the format of MGA464639. The MGA refers to the Map Grid of Australia, which is the projection used by modern NSW maps.

The first 3 digits refer to the Eastings, which relate to the numbers along the bottom or top of the map, and the second 3 digits relate to the Northings, which are the numbers along the left or right of the map.

To find a location, first locate the corner of the East (46) and North (63) kilometre square by locating these numbers on the relevant sides of the map, and then estimate the tenths (East - 4, North - 9) towards the next kilometre grid lines.

The MGA projection is essentially the same as a UTM (Universal Transverse Mercator) projection of WGS84. If you are using a GPS, set the datum to WGS84, and the position format to UTM/UPS.

To read the six-figure grid reference off a GPS, take the middle 3 digits of each row of the location.

Old map references of the form AMG464639 can be found in some places in the guide. These relate to older maps, but may still be useful for some users. See the website ([https://ozultimate.com/canyoning/map\\_grids.htm](https://ozultimate.com/canyoning/map_grids.htm)) for more details.

## 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.

## Number of abseils

The number of abseils a party needs to do, or wants to do, can be quite variable. Small abseils can be often be scrambled down by skilled parties. Some abseils can be walked around. Others can be jumped. One big abseil can be split into two or more, or shorter abseils combined into one. The bottom line is that there is no fixed figure for the total number of abseils for a canyon.

This figure is indicative, as typically the more abseils, the harder the canyon and the longer it is likely to take.

Read the notes for what is recommended, keeping in mind that conditions change.

## Longest abseil

This length is a fairly conservative number, generally rounded up to the next 5m. If you read the notes carefully, you will find in many cases that by splitting drops, or not doing optional drops, you can in fact complete the canyon with less rope. This length is mainly provided for people who don't want to read the notes closely prior to starting out.

Note that even if you have enough rope to cope with this length abseil, there are choices that you may make in the canyon that will put you outside this number! Don't assume it will cover you for every eventuality.

## Distances

Distances are measured off the map or with GPS. Given the meandering nature of tracks to and from the canyon, and route finding in the canyon, they will typically understate the actual distance travelled by 10-30%. Also keep in mind that distance sometimes has little bearing on time taken. While walking on tracks at 3-4km/h is possible, while boulder hopping in creeks, or pushing through thick scrub, walking speed can drop to 1km/h or even less!

Where alternative routes are suggested, the distance usually relates to the first or primary route.

## Ascent

The ascent is an indication of the total height gain during the trip. It is the sum of the largest climb, plus any other significant climbs - typically those of 50m or more. In most cases, this will either be on the walk in or the walk out of the canyon.

## Quality ratings

Many of my canyon track notes have a rating out of 10 for the canyon, mostly based around the **length/quality of the slot**.

- 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 favourite 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.

## Time

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, or long abseils.

## 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 in some canyons 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 or more frequent deep wades and possible short swims
- Recommended - most parties should take wetsuits. Typically canyons with frequent wading

and swimming, possibly including longer swims

- Lilos - both wetsuits and lilos are recommended. Typically canyons with many long, deep pools. Confident swimmers may make do with wetsuits only, but long immersion in cold water means that a full steamer-type wetsuit is recommended, and flotation in your pack

## Maps

Listed maps are all 1:25000 topographic maps of NSW, and can be purchased from outdoor stores and map shops. Digital versions can also be downloaded for free from SIX Maps e-Topo portal.

## 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](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. The directions below should make for easier navigation to the various canyon trackheads in the area. All distances are in kilometres.

The directions can be used with the map available on the website at:

[https://ozultimate.com/canyoning/fire\\_trails.htm](https://ozultimate.com/canyoning/fire_trails.htm)

Most canyon trackheads for South Wolgan and Bungleboori canyons are accessed from fire trails off the Glowworm Tunnel Road. There are two main ways of getting to the Glowworm Tunnel Road.

The first route - via Old Bells Line of Road is best if you are coming from the east - from Sydney, or the main part of the Blue Mountains. This runs between the Zig Zag railway at Clarence, and the Glowworm Tunnel Rd. This route used to deteriorate a lot after rain, but for the past 10 years or so has been kept fairly well maintained for mining and logging trucks.

The second route is from Lithgow, via State Mine Gully Rd. This route makes more sense if you are already at Lithgow, or are coming from west of the Blue Mountains.

State Mine Gully Road and Old Bells Line of Road from Clarence/Zig Zag join to become the Glowworm Tunnel Rd at a T-intersection - a place I'm going to refer to as Paddys Creek Corner

for brevity, since it is right at the head of the Paddys Creek drainage. This can be found at MGA398984 (Lithgow map). Most of the remaining directions below start from there.

The routes listed below are generally suitable for 2wd cars with plenty of clearance. Low clearance vehicles may have difficulty on some roads if they have not been graded recently. Low clearance vehicles will likely have trouble accessing the Natural Bridge and Deep Pass at all times. Note that the routes are all dirt roads, and need regular grading. The fire trails can deteriorate significantly between gradings, and may become difficult or even impassable for certain vehicles. There are a couple of sections of clay on the main Glowworm Tunnel Rd which can be difficult for all vehicles after heavy rain and some traffic. Use common sense at all times, regardless of your vehicle.

### Zig Zag to Paddys Creek Corner via Old Bells Line of Road

- 0.0 Turn north off Bells Line of Road at Zig Zag railway turnoff. This is not signposted, as the Zig Zag Railway is currently closed. The turnoff is opposite the junction of Bells Line of Road and Petra Ave at Clarence.
- 0.1 Turn right, signposted Newnes Forest Rd, following the railway tracks
- 0.5 Turn left across the tracks
- 0.6 Keep right at a Y-intersection to avoid entering the sawmill
- 4.8 Turn left at a sharp bend - the Dumbano Fire Trail (currently unsignposted) turns off to the right.
- 8.8 You reach Paddys Creek Corner, at a T-junction with the Glowworm Tunnel Rd.

### Zig Zag to Dumbano Fire Trail via Old Bells Line of Road

This route is generally not suitable for 2wd vehicles at around the 7km mark, and possibly at any time after turning off Old Bells Line of Rd. This road is useful for accessing the upper reaches of Dumbano and Yarramun Creeks, as well as parts of the upper Wollangambe River.

- 0.0 Turn north off Bells Line of Road at Zig Zag railway turnoff. This is not signposted, as the Zig Zag Railway is currently closed. The turnoff is opposite the junction of Bells Line of Road and Petra Ave at Clarence.
- 0.1 Turn right, signposted Newnes Forest Rd, following the railway tracks
- 0.5 Turn left across the tracks
- 0.6 Keep right at a Y-intersection to avoid entering the sawmill
- 4.8 Turn right at a sharp bend on to the Dumbano Fire Trail (currently unsignposted) - Old Bells Line of Road heads left
- 6.0 Turn left at a clearing
- 7.2 Turn right as the main trail goes straight ahead. About 700m along here is a steep rocky ascent, probably the most rugged

- 11.1 Keep left at a Y-intersection
- 14.1 You reach a locked gate at the end of the trail

**Lithgow to Paddys Creek Corner**

- 0.0 Start at the intersection of Main St and Bridge St in Lithgow, and head north to cross the bridge over the railway tracks
- 0.1 Turn right on to Inch St immediately after you cross the bridge over the railway tracks
- 1.3 Turn left into Atkinson St, as Inch St goes around a right hand bend
- 2.0 Turn right on to State Mine Gully Rd, which immediately crosses a level crossing and a bridge. It then becomes a dirt road as it heads steeply up a hill, and becomes the Glowworm Tunnel Rd at the top of the hill
- 8.3 You reach Paddys Creek Corner, at the junction with Old Bells Line of Road (on your right)

**Paddys Creek Corner to Waratah Ridge car park (Hole-in-the-Wall car park)**

- 0.0 Continue north on Glowworm Tunnel Rd
- 2.3 The Glowworm Tunnel Rd swings to the right at the old Bungleboori Picnic area - avoid a turnoff to the left on to the Blackfellows Hand Trail
- 5.4 Turn right at Waratah Ridge Rd (currently unsignposted - there is a signpost opposite pointing to Western Boundary Road)
- 9.0 Keep left on Waratah Ridge Rd at the intersection with Eastern Boundary Rd (currently signposted)
- 9.4 Turn right, still on Waratah Ridge Rd, at Two Trees Rd intersection (signposted)
- 11.4 Keep right at a Y intersection
- 12.4 Keep straight ahead at a 3-way intersection
- 13.0 You reach the Waratah Ridge car park at the locked gate

**Paddys Creek Corner to Galah Mountain car park (Rocky Creek car park)**

- 0.0 Continue north on Glowworm Tunnel Rd
- 2.3 The Glowworm Tunnel Rd swings to the right at the old Bungleboori Picnic area - avoid a turnoff to the left on to the Blackfellows Hand Trail
- 5.4 Keep straight ahead at Waratah Ridge Rd (unsignposted)
- 15.7 Turn right at Galah Mountain Rd (signposted to Rocky Creek)
- 16.0 Pass Barcoo Swamp camping area on your right
- 16.1 Veer left at a Y intersection

- 20.8 Turn right at a locked gate. This is the trackhead for a number of canyons, including Surefire and Heart Attack
- 21.1 Pass a locked gate on your left. This is the trackhead for a number of canyons, including Breakfast Creek, Closet and Galah
- 22.2 Reach the Galah Mountain car park

**Paddys Creek Corner to Old Coach Road car park**

- 0.0 Continue north on Glowworm Tunnel Rd
- 2.3 The Glowworm Tunnel Rd swings to the right at the old Bungleboori Picnic area - avoid a turnoff to the left on to the Blackfellows Hand Trail
- 5.4 Keep straight ahead at Waratah Ridge Rd (signposted)
- 15.7 Keep straight ahead following signs to Glowworm Tunnel at Galah Mountain Rd (signposted)
- 20.2 Turn right at a Y-intersection on to the Old Coach Road (signposted).
- 24.3 Reach the Old Coach Road car park on your right.

**Paddys Creek Corner to Glowworm Tunnel car park**

- 0.0 Continue north on Glowworm Tunnel Rd
- 2.3 The Glowworm Tunnel Rd swings to the right at the old Bungleboori Picnic area - avoid a turnoff to the left on to the Blackfellows Hand Trail
- 5.4 Keep straight ahead at Waratah Ridge Rd (signposted)
- 15.7 Keep straight ahead following signs to Glowworm Tunnel at Galah Mountain Rd (signposted)
- 20.2 Keep straight ahead at a Y-intersection (Old Coach Road, signposted)
- 26.9 Reach the Glowworm Tunnel car park

**Paddys Creek Corner to Deep Pass**

- 0.0 Continue north on Glowworm Tunnel Rd
- 2.3 The Glowworm Tunnel Rd swings to the right at the old Bungleboori Picnic area - avoid a turnoff to the left on to the Blackfellows Hand Trail
- 5.4 Pass Waratah Ridge Rd (unsignposted) on your right
- 11.7 Turn right at the end of the pine plantation into Eastern Boundary Rd (unsignposted).

12.3 Turn left at the second intersection at a large clearing. Note that another route - the Deep Pass Trail - continues straight ahead from here. This leads to Deep Pass South. Deep Pass South can also be used to access Deep Pass.

12.8 Veer right at a Y-intersection

14.9 Keep straight ahead as a fire trail turns off to the right

15.4 Turn right at a Y-intersection. A sign points left to Mt Cameron, right to Deep Pass.

16.3 Keep straight ahead as a fire trail turns to the right. A sign points straight ahead to Deep Pass.

16.4 Keep straight ahead where a road heads left

17.5 Reach the Deep Pass car park

### **Paddys Creek Corner to Natural Bridge**

0.0 Continue north on Glowworm Tunnel Rd

2.3 The Glowworm Tunnel Rd swings to the right at the old Bungleboori Picnic area - avoid a turnoff to the left on to the Blackfellows Hand Trail

5.4 Pass Waratah Ridge Rd (signposted) on your right

11.7 Turn right at the end of the pine plantation into Eastern Boundary Rd (unsignposted).

12.3 Turn left at the second intersection at a large clearing

12.8 Veer right at a Y-intersection

14.9 Keep straight ahead as a fire trail turns off to the right

15.4 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 this route is not recommended for any vehicle.

16.3 Keep straight ahead as a fire trail turns to the right. A sign points straight ahead to Deep Pass.

16.4 Turn left on to a fire trail. There are numerous fallen trees in this section that the trail detours around.

17.8 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.

18.7 Pass the park boundary sign. A closed fire trail branches off to your right.

19.1 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. Firefly Canyon and Looking Glass Canyon are also nearby on Island Mountain.

**Maps (1:25,000):** Mount Morgan, Ben Bullen

**Access:** From Sydney, 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. It is about 10km to the top of Wolgan Gap, where the road becomes narrow and winding for about 2km down the steep descent. Then it is another 14km of bitumen road to the Wolgan Valley Resort, and a ford at Barton Creek. From there it is dirt road for the last 8.5km to Newnes, usually fairly good quality.

**Camping:** There is a kiosk/information centre in the old hotel on the left, and the main campsite is 1km further on. Newnes (Little Capertee) campground has pit toilets (BYO loo paper just in case) and a lovely big grassy area, with lots of options for camping. You'll often see wombats and wallabies at dusk.

**Services:** 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 the service station in Lidsdale. Nearest supermarket and other services is Lithgow.

**Driving times:**

- from Sydney: 3h
- from Lithgow: 1h

### **Newnes (Starlight) Canyon**

**Difficulty:** M

**Abseils:** 1-3

**Distance:** 15km

**Quality:** 10/10

**Date last checked:** 2010-01-02

**Time:** 7-9 hours

**Longest abseil:** 25m

**Ascent:** 470m

**Wetsuits:** Not required

**Maps:** Ben Bullen, Mount Morgan

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 (Little Capertee) 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). There are some tracks leading to the left, away from the river, and these should be ignored. Crossing Petries Gully may involve wet feet. The bottom of the Pipeline Track is reached just after the Petries Gully crossing. 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 MGA459279 (AMG458277, Mount Morgan). Head N then NE down the ridge, and abseil about 15m into the creek at MGA465284 (AMG464282). The creek can also be entered higher up without abseiling.

### Notes

The canyon starts at MGA465284 (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 17m 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.

The canyon should be avoided in winter (May-September) due to the risk of disturbing hibernating bats. See the sign at the saddle for more information.

## Devils Pinch Canyon

**Difficulty:** M

**Time:** 7-9 hours

**Abseils:** 2-6

**Distance:** 13km

**Quality:** 9/10

**Date last checked:** 2018-12-22

**Longest abseil:** 30m

**Ascent:** 420m

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Maps:** Ben Bullen, Mount Morgan

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 (Little Capertee) 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). There are some tracks leading to the left, away from the river, and these should be ignored. Crossing Petries Gully may involve wet feet. The bottom of the Pipeline Track is reached just after the Petries Gully crossing. Climb up to the top of the hill on the track. A sign points to a good lookout over the Wolgan Valley about 100m walk to the south. Continue along the main track to the watershed and saddle above Green Gully, where there is a National Parks sign about Starlight Canyon.

Turn right and follow a fainter track up and then north around the small hill to the east. The track then follows the ridge north-east, then east, and then SSE around the back of a large flat hill. Leave the track and continue heading SSE over the ridge in front of you and in to the headwaters of the creek at MGA457278 (Mount Morgan). Continue down the creek to the first section of canyon at MGA458276.

### Notes

Climb along a ledge to the right and do a 26m abseil into a shallow pool. This avoids a series of tricky shorter abseils leading straight down the creek. If you do the tricky abseils, the third probably needs to be rigged while on the second abseil, as the anchor is on a chockstone well off the ground.

Either way, a 5m climb down a groove follows. It may be possible to abseil this by continuing the previous abseil, but the pull down becomes difficult.

Soon after, the canyon opens out for several hundred metres, before dropping in to the lower canyon section. Following this are a number of short climbs into pools. There are likely to be a few short swims in this section. The water level in Devils Pinch can change quite a bit depending on the recent weather. You may be largely able to avoid many of the swims by judicious scrambling and bridging.

Shortly you reach a spectacular 17m overhanging abseil. The usual anchor, a tree, is a long way back, so the drop may be up to 23m in all. After a couple more short wades or swims, the generally dry lower corridor is reached. This 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 continue straight ahead and do two slippery abseils of up to 25m down the big waterfall first.

### Exit

Cross the river, turn right and walk upstream for about 400m until you reach the old road from Newnes, which you can follow back to the campground. Alternatively, you could also pick up the

old road by walking 100m downstream.

### Comments

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

Depending on recent weather, 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

**Time:** 5-7 hours

**Abseils:** 5-10

**Longest abseil:** 25m

**Distance:** 9km

**Ascent:** 300m

**Quality:** 8/10

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Date last checked:** 2017-02-18

**Maps:** Ben Bullen, Mount Morgan

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 (Little Capertee) 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). There are some tracks leading to the left, away from the river, and these should be ignored. Crossing Petries Gully may involve wet feet. The bottom of the Pipeline Track is reached just after the Petries Gully crossing. Climb up to the top of the hill on the track. A side track leads to a good lookout about 100m walk to the SSE.

Returning to the main track, continue along 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. Cross the next two saddles, and drop down from the slopes of the hill aiming for the bend in the creek around MGA452278 (AMG451276, Mount Morgan). There is a bit of a scramble to get down the bottom of the hill. Some parties may end up needing to abseil. 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 is a well-worn footpad leaving the Pipeline Track here. 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 after the second canyon section starts.

### Notes

The first section of the canyon is not far. This has a number of easy climb downs, but no abseils, and is dry. There is an impressive narrow section with massive coachwoods stretching all the way

to the top of the slot. 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 very awkward 4m drop. These can be combined, and made easier, with a 50m rope. However a recent tree fall will probably make combining the drops impossible for some time. There is a short swim, or traverse around the side of the pool. Then there is a short drop, with a tricky overhung start, though it is about 10m all up as the anchor is some distance back. The final abseil also has a slightly tricky start. This is about 15m (12m drop, plus a few metres to the anchor) 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. Keep close to the cliffs to avoid a lower track on hairier ledges.

### Comments

An excellent canyon. The top section 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 usually silted up, which could become swims at other times. Experienced parties can often do without wetsuits.

## Firefly Canyon

**Difficulty:** M

**Time:** 7-9 hours

**Abseils:** 5-7

**Longest abseil:** 20m

**Distance:** 12km

**Ascent:** 330m

**Quality:** 6/10

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Date last checked:** 2014-04-05

**Maps:** Ben Bullen, Mount Morgan

Firefly Canyon is a good canyon on the south 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 MGA447259 (Mount Morgan). 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 cliff line, 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 MGA451247. 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 MGA461256. 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 cliff line 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 cliff lines are either difficult to negotiate or find.

### Other Newnes (Wolgan) Canyons

**Nightmare Canyon** - MGA456271 (Mount Morgan), 9-11 abseils up to 30m or 35m (depending on anchor choice), one short wade or swim

**Looking Glass Canyon** - MGA464255 (Mount Morgan), 7-11 abseils up to 22m, possible short swim

**Twilight Canyon** - MGA481248 (Mount Morgan), several short abseils, longer one (up to 20m) may be required to get into the canyon, many short swims

## 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 Claustral Canyon. Other good canyons in the area include Surefire Canyon and Galah Canyon.

**Maps (1:25,000):** Rock Hill, Mount Morgan, Ben Bullen, Cullen Bullen (driving)

**Access:** The whole area is a mess of fire trails, so driving instructions can be found in the Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails section. The fire trails are usually 2wd accessible, but some

may require high clearance.

**Camping:** The Barcoo Swamp camping area lies off Galah Mountain Rd, just after it leaves the Glowworm Tunnel Rd. This is a nice grassy area, and most of the canyons are less than 20 minutes drive from here. This is a primitive camping area, with no facilities, so please toilet responsibly.

Deep Pass camping area is also lovely, but requires a 15 minute walk from the car.

**Services:** Nearest food and petrol is in Lithgow, which has full services and supermarkets.

#### Driving times (to Barcoo Swamp)

- from Sydney: 2h 45m
- from Lithgow: 45m

### Tiger Snake Canyon

**Difficulty:** EM

**Abseils:** 2-5

**Distance:** 9km

**Quality:** 8/10

**Date last checked:** 2023-10-05

**Time:** 5-7 hours

**Longest abseil:** 25m

**Ascent:** 230m

**Wetsuits:** No

**Maps:** Ben Bullen, Mount Morgan

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 track to the east (an old fire trail). After about 200m it turns roughly north and follows the ridge for about 3km. Near the end it slides off the east side of the ridge down to the start of the creek at MGA439210 (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 grater 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 for an 18m abseil.

Then there is a 2m climb down into a shallow pool.

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 23m drop (previously 17m - anchor is now higher). The abseil is straightforward 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 prusik 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 impressive. 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 22m 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.

You can scramble up at the first obvious spot to your right, or go a further 10m to an even easier ramp, 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 MGA437209.

#### **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. There are a number of abseils if desired, although the entire top section (including the last big drop) can in fact 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 Dry Canyon**

**Difficulty:** E

**Time:** 1-2 hours

**Abseils:** No

**Longest abseil:** NA

**Distance:** 3km

**Ascent:** 80m

**Quality:** 8/10

**Wetsuits:** No

**Date last checked:** 2014-07-20

**Maps:** Cullen Bullen

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 MGA408166 (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 MGA403167 (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:** MH

**Time:** 8-12 hours

**Abseils:** 3-5

**Longest abseil:** 15m

**Distance:** 18km

**Ascent:** 270m

**Quality:** 9/10

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Date last checked:** 2017-01-08

**Maps:** Rock Hill, Mount Morgan

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 MGA463142 (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 MGA472200 (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 at MGA476201 (AMG475199) with a 12m drop from a tree on the right, followed by a short abseil (4m) or hand over hand. A tricky 10m abseil over a chockstone immediately follows, 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. Then there is a short awkward climb down or abseil into a narrow section. Shortly after this, 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.

There are a number of wades or possible swims, but these are generally only a few metres long.

### Exit

The exit is quite tricky, and involves a few exposed moves. The leader can lower a rope to assist in places.

Return to the exit canyon, which is a nice canyon in its own right and worth exploring. 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.

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 at the saddle at MGA461210 (AMG460208). Follow the fire trail S back to the car.

### Comments

Surefire is a great canyon with an impressive constriction. The round trip is the best part of 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 generally required.

## Heart Attack Canyon

**Difficulty:** MH

**Abseils:** 2-6

**Distance:** 16km

**Quality:** 7/10

**Date last checked:** 2017-01-07

**Time:** 7-10 hours

**Longest abseil:** 35m

**Ascent:** 350m

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Maps:** Rock Hill, Mount Morgan

Heart Attack Canyon is a good canyon in the lower reaches of Rocky Creek. It starts with an impressive 30m+ 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.

Note that the new topographic maps do not show most of the old fire trails, so use the South Wolgan Canyons map available for printing from the website.

From the locked gate for the Deanes Lookout Trail at MGA463143 (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 MGA467180 (AMG466178, Mount Morgan). Head NE along the fire trail to the right, which passes a small hill called Murrays Mount at MGA472186 (AMG471184). This area is basalt and was the site of an old farm. Continue along the trail E and then SE 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 clearing and bend in the track 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 MGA486188 (AMG485186). On the right of the creek you can do a 40m abseil down the main cliff line. 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 abseil of up to 35m at MGA486191 (AMG485189). This can be done from various places but the big chockstone 20m downstream provides an easy pull down, and is about 32m. The side canyon 150m downstream on the left can also be used for shorter drops to enter. After this the canyon opens out slightly into an excellent gorge for a while before narrowing further. There are a number of tricky climb downs, for which some parties may need a rope. There is a final tricky 9m abseil near the end. There are typically a number of short wades, mostly to waist deep but possibly deeper at times.

### Exit

After the canyon ends, head downstream for a few hundred metres to the next major gully on the left at MGA485197 (AMG484196). This provides an easy exit back to the tops. Climb the hill to the NW and follow the ridge back to the fire trail.

### Comments

Heart Attack is a very 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 generally required.

## Galah Canyon

**Difficulty:** MH

**Time:** 7-9 hours

**Abseils:** 4-8

**Longest abseil:** 30m

**Distance:** 12km

**Ascent:** 300m

**Quality:** 8/10

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Date last checked:** 2016-12-03

**Maps:** Rock Hill, Mount Morgan

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 MGA467143 (AMG466141, Rock Hill), head N along the old fire trail, now really just a foot track. This contours around the north side of Galah Mountain, before heading down the ridge to the north. Stay on same track when the Rocky Creek exit track turns off to the right at MGA473148 (AMG472146). The old fire trail ends at a clearing at MGA477169 (AMG476167). Head NE along the ridge for 500m and then E and then SE to the bend in the creek at MGA482172 (AMG481170), avoiding cliffs. 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 MGA491177 (AMG490175).

### Notes

There are a couple of options for the first drop. Safest is probably to abseil 28m from the obvious gum tree just left of the creek. Alternatively abseil, scramble down the small gully on the left and abseil about 20m from a tree at the bottom. Be careful of loose rocks.

Then there is an awkward overhanging 5m abseil, followed by a slide or abseil down a log. A slightly dodgy slide into knee deep water follows, though there may be a log for a short abseil instead. Then there is a 7m abseil over a chockstone, followed by a drop of about 3m that can be abseiled or possibly scrambled. The final abseil is about 5m, just beyond a deep pool. However, the anchor is some way back (10m), and the waterfall is very slippery. Following this 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 to the right 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 them along until you rejoin the creek. Continue up the creek and exit where you dropped in at the start. Alternatively you can exit at an amphitheatre on the right about 50m before the abseil in the upper section.

There are also other exits further upstream on Rocky Creek itself.

### Comments

Galah is a beautiful canyon with a challenging exit. Typically there are a few wades from waist to chest deep, and a possible short swim or two. Wetsuits are not really required with a bit of scrambling skill.

## Thunderstorm Canyon

**Difficulty:** MH

**Time:** 8-11 hours

**Abseils:** 1-3

**Longest abseil:** 40m

**Distance:** 11km

**Ascent:** 400m

**Quality:** 2/10

**Wetsuits:** Not required

**Date last checked:** 2005-03-15

**Maps:** Rock Hill

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, on the east side of Rocky Creek. However, it is probably an easier and more worthwhile day to do it from Closet Canyon, on the west 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 may be a tape near the bottom to get up the first difficult 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 cliff line, 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 MGA501164 (AMG500162, Rock Hill). 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 rerig at a lower tree. Then there is a short abseil or climb down. The canyon opens out into a deep gorge,

and it is an easy walk back to the Rocky Creek junction.

#### Exit

As for Closet Canyon.

### Closet Canyon

**Difficulty:** M

**Time:** 6-9 hours

**Abseils:** 2-7

**Longest abseil:** 40m

**Distance:** 10km

**Ascent:** 320m

**Quality:** 5/10

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Date last checked:** 2011-02-26

**Maps:** Rock Hill

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 MGA467143 (AMG466141, Rock Hill), 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 MGA489166 (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, and is probably easiest to jump. 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. If your ropes are too short or pulldown is an issue, a rebelay point can normally be found about 20m down in the boulders.

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. Most parties will have a short swim or two, though very good scramblers and bridgers may be able to avoid them.

### Breakfast Creek Canyon

**Difficulty:** EM

**Time:** 6-8 hours

**Abseils:** 4-5

**Longest abseil:** 30m

**Distance:** 8km

**Ascent:** 290m

**Quality:** 5/10

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Date last checked:** 2015-02-28

**Maps:** Rock Hill

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 MGA467143 (AMG466141, Rock Hill), 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 a possible 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 MGA486143 (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). Turn left at the top, and follow the cliffline until it breaks. Then follow the track up the ridge and 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 but typically no swims. There are possible short swims in Rocky Creek. Many parties can probably do without wetsuits.

## Coachwood Canyon

**Difficulty:** EM

**Time:** 5-8 hours

**Abseils:** 3-5

**Longest abseil:** 25m

**Distance:** 7km

**Ascent:** 250m

**Quality:** 4/10

**Wetsuits:** Not required

**Date last checked:** 2018-01-20

**Maps:** Rock Hill

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 car park, head N, then NE, and finally E along the ridge towards the 973 point. There may be a track in places. Head NE down into the creek, just below the junction at MGA479142, trying to avoid cliff lines. Various entry points exist.

### Notes

There is a 35m waterfall in the eastern branch of the creek, just above the junction at MGA479142. If you follow the entry directions you should come in just below this. If you come in above the waterfall you will need to abseil. The abseil can be split into shorter drops, but the middle anchor point is off to the left about 20m down, and difficult to get to. It is also possible but difficult to scramble off from this lower anchor.

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. There may be a 10m hand-over-hand or abseil. Then, from an anchor above a pool, there is a 4m drop into the pool, usually waist deep, continuing on the same rope with an 8m drop with a tricky start due to the angle of the rope. This requires about 40m of rope all up as the first drop is set back. You can stay dry by a tricky scramble along a narrow ledge to the right around the 4m drop.

Then scramble through a hole, and from inside there is a 6m drop down a waterfall into a shallow pool. Alternatively, you can do a 14m abseil from a tree on the left.

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 upstream through Rocky Creek Canyon. Upstream through the canyon 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. With care, it is possible to stay almost completely dry. For a good summer trip, it is worth taking wetsuits and exiting by reversing Rocky Creek.

## Rocky Creek Canyon

**Difficulty:** E

**Time:** 3-5 hours

**Abseils:** No

**Longest abseil:** NA

**Distance:** 3km

**Ascent:** 250m

**Quality:** 10/10

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Date last checked:** 2018-01-20

**Maps:** Rock Hill

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, fun upper constriction some 4km upstream, with some jumps and slides and an abseil, known as Sheep Dip Canyon, but most parties only do the lower constriction.

For a slightly longer day, start with the excellent and fun Twister Canyon, and then continue on through Rocky Creek.

### Entry

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

From the Rocky Creek car park, 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. The main constriction is particularly spectacular, similar to Claustral and the Grand Canyon. The canyon ends at the Budgery 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 simply reverse the canyon, although one of the climb downs can be quite difficult if there is a lot of water.

Alternatively, continue downstream for 1km to a sharp right hand bend, and climb the gully on the left. Once you break through the upper line of 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.

Also, there is a climbing exit opposite the Budgery 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 right 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 cliff line. You may pick up a track that leads to Coachwood Canyon as you get closer to Galah Mountain. Contour around the east side of Galah Mountain to get back to the cars.

## Twister Canyon

**Difficulty:** E

**Time:** 2-3 hours

**Abseils:** No

**Longest abseil:** NA

**Distance:** 2km

**Ascent:** 170m

**Quality:** 5/10

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Date last checked:** 2018-01-20

**Maps:** Rock Hill

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 car park, 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

**Time:** 1-3 hours

**Abseils:** No

**Longest abseil:** NA

**Distance:** 3km

**Ascent:** 120m

**Quality:** 5/10

**Wetsuits:** No

**Date last checked:** 2021-01-26

**Maps:** Rock Hill

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 it becomes a foot track, and continue to 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 a quite a few drops with fixed ropes to climb up through the canyon. Some of these may be dodgy, so take care.

Getting near the top of the canyon, there is a large pool that you need to traverse on the right. You will get quite wet if you do slip. On the far side of the pool is normally 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 at MGA489074, head up the slope to the right (NE) and up on to the ridge. Pick up a faint track along the ridge, heading NNW and then WNW to the car park. 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. 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  
**Abseils:** No  
**Distance:** 3km  
**Quality:** 6/10  
**Date last checked:** 2011-12-18

**Time:** 1-2 hours  
**Longest abseil:** NA  
**Ascent:** 160m  
**Wetsuits:** No  
**Maps:** Rock Hill

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 on a scrubby track that leads down into the gully. This can be difficult to follow, but mostly stays on the east (right) bank. Just over a kilometre 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 about knee or thigh deep (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.

## Other South Wolgan Canyons

**Hartleys Mistake Canyon** - MGA459234 (Mount Morgan), 2 abseils to about 15m, probable short swim

**Bigfoot Canyon** - MGA459255 (Mount Morgan), several short abseils to about 10m, wade or possible swim

**Contradiction Canyon** - MGA502182 (Mount Morgan), numerous short abseils or tricky scrambles, and short swims

**Sheep Dip Canyon** - MGA459106 (Rock Hill), jumps and slides, and an abseil of about 18m, easy

## 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 north-south running canyons are typically drier than those to the south and east, with short wades and the occasional swim.

**Maps (1:25,000):** Wollangambe, Rock Hill, Lithgow (driving), Cullen Bullen (driving)

**Access:** Access is similar to the South Wolgan area. Driving instructions can be found in the Newnes Plateau & South Wolgan Fire Trails section. Fire trails are 2wd accessible under normal conditions.

**Camping:** There is a small amount of primitive camping at the end of the road at Waratah Ridge. Please keep the area clean.

**Services:** The nearest food and petrol is in Lithgow, which has full services and supermarkets.

### Driving times

- from Sydney: 2h 30m
- from Lithgow: 30m

## Hole-in-the-Wall Canyon

**Difficulty:** M  
**Abseils:** 3-5  
**Distance:** 14km  
**Quality:** 7/10  
**Date last checked:** 2020-10-23

**Time:** 7-9 hours  
**Longest abseil:** 15m  
**Ascent:** 250m  
**Wetsuits:** Recommended  
**Maps:** Wollangambe, Rock Hill

Hole-in-the-Wall is an impressive canyon flowing into the north branch of Bungleboori Creek (now less evocatively known as Dingo Creek). It features an upper and a lower section separated by a section of open creek. Both constrictions are of high quality. The lower constriction also features an enclosed tunnel populated with glowworms.

### 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 Waratah Ridge Road, pass through the gate and follow the main fire trail, ignoring trails first to the right and then to the left after a few minutes. Continue for about half an hour to a clearing where the trail becomes a foot track and turns sharply left past a burnt sign. Follow this for another 20 minutes to a track junction. Take the track to the left, which reaches a large pagoda after a further 20 minutes. Head around the right of the pagoda and follow a track to the right down into the gully. Turn left and follow the creek downstream to where you need to start wading. The canyon starts shortly after this, so this is a possible spot to put wetsuits on.

### Notes

The first section of canyon consists of some short swims or wades and an awkward climb

down in a dark section. It starts at about MGA516039 and finishes about MGA518039.

There is a walk of about half an hour to the lower canyon section, which starts about MGA520046. The section starts with a 3m jump (check depth), or hand-over-hand, or abseil. Shortly after this is an abseil of 8m down a log. Then follows an abseil or hand-over-hand of 4m. Next is the tunnel section. This involves wading/swimming through a pool, and then squeezing through a narrow crack. It can also be climbed over the top, which may be needed if the water level is too high or low, or certain people are unable to fit through the squeeze.

A little further on is the second abseil. This is about 12m from thread belays on the right hand side. This may be through a narrow hole, or if the hole is blocked, you need to go over the top - with a very awkward start. There is one final short abseil (4m) and then it is a short walk to where the canyon emerges into Dingo Creek through a narrow slot (the "Hole-in-the-Wall").

At the Bungleboori, swim and wade upstream for several hundred metres through spectacular canyon, to where the creek opens out. Head to the point of the big bend at MGA519050, and then look for an eroded track up a minor gully on the left. Note that there is a false track on the left just before reaching the big bend, which ends looking over the actual exit.

#### Exit

The track climbs steeply up on to the ridge, and then back along the ridge to the big pagoda where you entered the creek. Retrace your steps from here back to the car park.

#### Comments

Hole-in-the-Wall is an impressive canyon. Wetsuits are advisable for most parties, as there are a few swims, including up Dingo Creek at the end. Avoid it after significant rain as the swim/wade up Dingo Creek can become difficult/impossible.

### Other Bungleboori Canyons

**Banks Canyon** - MGA524055 (Rock Hill), around 5 abseils up to 20m, several swims

**Nosedive Canyon** - MGA527054 (Rock Hill), 2-5 abseils up to 20m, several swims

**Fortitude Canyon** - MGA533055 (Rock Hill), 2-4 abseils up to 30m, wades and possible swims

**Crikey Canyon** - MGA544042 (Rock Hill), around 5 abseils up to 15m, one main swim of around 15m

**Popeye Canyon** - MGA497032 (Wollangambe), 2-3 abseils up to 10m, possible swim

**Froth-and-Bubble Canyon** - MGA533034 (Wollangambe), around 2 abseils up to 10m, though the first may need a long anchor or longer ropes, possible short swim and wades

**Scatters Canyon** - MGA502014 (Wollangambe), possible short abseils and swims

**Dead Tree Canyon** - MGA518009 (Wollangambe), 4-8 abseils up to 15m, possible short swims

**Four Dope Canyon** - MGA530013 (Wollangambe), 2-5 abseils up to 20m, wades or possible short swims

**Steep Creek (Bridge) Canyon** - MGA545020 (Wollangambe), many abseils, mostly short, but a

couple of longer ones near the end (one 50m rope sufficient), several swims

**Bjelkes Mind Canyon** - MGA547021 (Wollangambe), around 5 abseils up to 15m, wades to waist deep, possible swim(s) or deep wades

**Luna Park Canyon** - (main canyon) MGA519003 (Wollangambe), 3-5 abseils up to 15m, numerous short swims

## 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.

**Maps (1:25,000):** Mount Wilson, Wollangambe

**Access:** Coming from Sydney, turn right off Bells Line of Road (B59) on to Mt Wilson Rd, about 20km past the Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens.

**Camping:** Mt Wilson has a great campground at Cathedral Reserve, on the far (north-east) side of town. There are pit toilets (BYO loo paper just in case) and a water tank, though you may want to bring drinking water. Please keep the area clean, and fires in the fire rings.

**Services:** Mt Wilson has a couple of small cafes, but no services. Nearest petrol is in Lithgow or Mt Victoria. Nearest supermarkets are Lithgow and Katoomba.

#### Driving times

- from Sydney: 2h
- from Lithgow: 30m
- from Mt Victoria: 30m
- from Katoomba: 45m

### Waterfall of Moss Canyon

**Difficulty:** MH

**Abseils:** 7-8

**Distance:** 8km

**Quality:** 3/10

**Date last checked:** 2022-12-04

**Time:** 6-9 hours

**Longest abseil:** 20m

**Ascent:** 400m

**Wetsuits:** Not required

**Maps:** Mount Wilson, Wollangambe

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 end 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, on the Lambs Hill FT. Keep right at the first fork, after 50m, and then keep left where a fire trail heads off to the right under the powerlines. After another 30m, head sharp left where the main fire trail goes straight to a gate and private property. 150m along this trail, take the right branch to the north, down the ridge. This reaches a clearing after 300m. Continue to the left on a trail for another 250m to where it turns into a foot track. The track is vague in places, but largely keeps to the ridge. Follow the track all the way down the ridge, with a little bit of scrambling in the last section to the Wollangambe.

Swim across the Wollangambe and climb up the gully on the other side. There is a climb of about 4m which hopefully has a fixed line hanging down. Once above this climb, head up to the lower cliffline, and around on to a ledge above the Wollangambe. As soon as you can, head up the minor ridge to the north, and once through small cliffines, veer slightly right to a break in the upper cliffs. Make your way up to the ridge, and then head north as the ridge swings NE and into the creek at about MGA570928.

As an alternative entry lower down, if you head left instead of right at the upper cliff line, a vague track goes for some distance around the base of the cliff line until it reaches a creek crossing. This point is the top of the 4th abseil, so you could use this as an early exit too.

### Notes

The first drop is about 9m from a tree on the left, overhung a bit at the bottom. After a walk down the creek, the second is about 10m from a tree on the left, with an overhang near the top. The third abseil is 15m from bolts on the left in two stages. There is a tricky overhang at the start, and then it goes through an arch and over another overhang near the bottom. The next abseil is 16m, though mainly because the anchor is some way back. This brings you into the main creek.

The fifth abseil is from a tree, down between two angled rock faces to an overhang - about 8m. The next abseil is 9m from a bollard on the left. The seventh is down a narrow 11m slot from bolts, over a chockstone. The last is 10m down the Waterfall of Moss off bolts on the left.

All bar the last abseil have overhung sections, though the abseils are easier than they used to be due to bolting.

### 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. In practice, only the first 50m and last 30m of the Wollangambe is likely to be compulsory swimming, and the rest wading.

### 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:** M

**Abseils:** 3-7

**Distance:** 11km

**Quality:** 9/10

**Date last checked:** 2023-01-11

**Time:** 7-10 hours

**Longest abseil:** 15m

**Ascent:** 480m

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Maps:** Mount Wilson, Wollangambe

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 MGA556925 (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 MGA559929. 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. While there is a sling on the left for a 5m abseil, followed by a possible duck-under, it is probably quicker 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. The latter may involve a handline.

There are several potential duck-unders in the canyon, though at normal water levels, there is usually a gap between the water and the roof. The duck-unders are usually in dark sections, so it may be handy to have your head torch available. There are a number of cold swims, although the longest is about 30m.

There are numerous 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. Shortly after there is a 9m abseil, with a short swim, followed immediately by a 6m abseil. These abseils used to be tricky, but there are currently bolts in place that make the starts easier.

One final obstacle involves a tricky pair of jump downs, or abseil, or possibly scramble down through boulders. 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

<b>Difficulty:</b> M	<b>Time:</b> 6-8 hours
<b>Abseils:</b> 2-4	<b>Longest abseil:</b> 15m
<b>Distance:</b> 8km	<b>Ascent:</b> 480m
<b>Quality:</b> 7/10	<b>Wetsuits:</b> Recommended
<b>Date last checked:</b> 2022-11-25	<b>Maps:</b> Mount Wilson, Wollangambe

Water Dragon Canyon is a very good canyon on the north side of the Wollangambe River. It is visited less frequently from the top as about half of its impressive constriction can be visited by walking up the canyon from the Wollangambe. Nevertheless, the whole constriction is quite 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 to the spot just before the track starts to go up to a small knoll. There may be a cairn at this point, and possibly a faint track.

There are two main options. One is to contour to the north for about 100m, on the west of the knoll, and then head west down the steep slope. Near the bottom, drop into the gully to the north, which takes you down into the main creek. Most parties will probably find this the quicker of the two routes.

Alternatively head due west, into a small, unmarked gully which ends with a drop into the main creek. Traverse right for about 30m to a tree with slings for a 16m (12m for the minimum drop) abseil into the creek.

Once in the creek, there is a 3m drop that can be climbed down, or optionally hand-over-handed, and a wade. The main canyon starts a little way after this at MGA554918.

### Notes

Use slings around a tree on the right to do a short hand-over-hand or abseil of 4m down to a

lower stance. There are then bolts on the right for the first abseil of 8m into a shallow pool.

There is a bit of a walk through the canyon to the second abseil, which is at the obvious creek junction on the map. You can climb down a crack using a handline if needed (about 4m), swim across a pool and abseil 12m from bolts on the right.

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

### Exit

At the Wollangambe, walk and swim downstream for 500m to where you crossed before. Flotation in your backpack is advisable, as much of the distance is swimming. Weaker swimmers may want a lilo.

### Comments

Water Dragon is a very good canyon with a couple of interesting abseils. There are only a couple of short swims in the canyon, but some very long ones down the Wollangambe to get back to the exit.

## Geronimo Canyon

<b>Difficulty:</b> M	<b>Time:</b> 6-8 hours
<b>Abseils:</b> 4-5	<b>Longest abseil:</b> 15m
<b>Distance:</b> 9km	<b>Ascent:</b> 460m
<b>Quality:</b> 6/10	<b>Wetsuits:</b> Recommended
<b>Date last checked:</b> 2021-03-07	<b>Maps:</b> Mount Wilson, Wollangambe

Geronimo Canyon is a good canyon tributary of the Wollangambe River. It has a 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 MGA543915 (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 MGA539922. 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 large log - needs a long sling to avoid a crack.

It is a short walk to the next abseil, of 7m, or perhaps a little more depending on how far back the anchor is. 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, and sometimes shallower, so be very careful

It is a bit of a walk to the final abseil. This is about 14m from a tree on a ledge on the left. It can be tricky to access this, though a handline may be in place. 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

<b>Difficulty:</b> M	<b>Time:</b> 11-16 hours (2 days best)
<b>Abseils:</b> No	<b>Longest abseil:</b> NA
<b>Distance:</b> 18km	<b>Ascent:</b> 500m
<b>Quality:</b> 8/10	<b>Wetsuits:</b> Recommended
<b>Date last checked:</b> 2019-02-02	<b>Maps:</b> Mount Wilson, Wollangambe

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. The time estimates assume this approach.

If you have 4WD cars, then you can probably drive along the Dumbano Fire Trail to the locked gate at MGA498951 (Wollangambe). Walk to the end of the road, scramble down to the left and walk down the river to Wollangambe Crater. This is a short way in, but would require a long car shuffle.

These involve leaving a car at Mt Wilson. From Wollangambe Crater, the river is slow going to where the canyon starts around MGA524914.

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 cliff lines upstream of the start.

#### Notes

The canyon begins with a long pool at MGA524914. There are many long pools, and high narrow walled sections. Lilos may be useful, but there are numerous large boulder chokes that take some

time to negotiate, which would be made more difficult with lilos.

#### Exit

Exit up the Geronimo track, which leaves the river at MGA543915, and leads back to the fire station at Mt Wilson.

### Wollangambe Canyon - Upper Tourist Section

<b>Difficulty:</b> E	<b>Time:</b> 5-7 hours
<b>Abseils:</b> No	<b>Longest abseil:</b> NA
<b>Distance:</b> 8km	<b>Ascent:</b> 320m
<b>Quality:</b> 5/10	<b>Wetsuits:</b> Lilos
<b>Date last checked:</b> 2011-12-24	<b>Maps:</b> Mount Wilson, Wollangambe

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.

Note that despite the grade of "Easy", getting to and from the canyon still requires a descent and ascent of over 300m on a track that is steep and rocky in places. The exit requires an exposed climb up tree roots. The canyon itself involves many long, cold swims, for which lilos and wetsuits are recommended, and there is a significant amount of climbing up, down and around house-sized boulders. Make sure you are fit and have appropriate gear before you go. There is no phone coverage.

Also, the time estimate of 5 to 7 hours is for a "moderately fit and experienced party of around 4-5 canyoners, including a couple of experienced leaders". Many groups will have inexperienced members, and will likely take longer - times of up to 10 or more hours are not uncommon.

#### 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 sign to the Wollangambe River 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 MGA546914.

#### 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 MGA555915. It is cold and dark, but spectacular.

## Exit

The usual exit is found at a beach (MGA560916) with a gully coming in on the right. NPWS have installed a small sign with a black arrow on yellow background pointing the way. 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 (green sign with arrow points the way) and follow this back to where another sign points left to Mt Wilson, 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 MGA563916 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 **Time:** 5-8 hours  
**Abseils:** No **Longest abseil:** NA  
**Distance:** 9km **Ascent:** 300m  
**Quality:** 6/10 **Wetsuits:** Lilos  
**Date last checked:** 2013-01-06 **Maps:** Mount Wilson, Wollangambe

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.

Note that despite the grade of "Easy", getting to and from the canyon still requires a descent and ascent of over 300m on a track that is steep and rocky in places. The entry requires an exposed climb down tree roots. The canyon itself involves many long, cold swims, for which lilos and wetsuits are recommended, and there is a significant amount of climbing up, down and around house-sized boulders. Make sure you are fit and have appropriate gear before you go. There is no phone coverage.

Also, the time estimate of 5 to 8 hours is for a "moderately fit and experienced party of around 4-5 canyoners, including a couple of experienced leaders". Many groups will have inexperienced members, and will likely take longer - times of up to 10 or more hours are not uncommon.

## Entry

From the NW corner of Cathedral Reserve at Mt Wilson, head along the Northern Fire Trail, that leaves to the west, and passes through private property. After about 1.2km, this forks, and you veer right down a hill on the major branch. Part way up the hill, there is a large signboard to the right to Wollangambe Canyon (MGA562904). Turn on to this track.

Follow the well-constructed track roughly north for 1.5km down to the river at MGA560916 (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 a small signpost and a large anthill. The constructed track ends at the top of a cliff, and there is an exposed scramble down tree roots. This is shortly 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 MGA565916. This is worth having a look up if you have time. If not, another 700m further on you pass **Whungee Wheengee Canyon** at MGA568919. 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 MGA570925, 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 MGA572925. 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 two gullies on opposite sides of the river. There is also a yellow and black arrow glued to the rock on the right. Head up the right hand gully, and up to the ridge. There is some scrambling lower down.

The track is a bit rough in places but largely follows the ridge. It turns into a fire trail at MGA573908. 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 **Time:** 7-10 hours  
**Abseils:** No **Longest abseil:** NA  
**Distance:** 11km **Ascent:** 510m  
**Quality:** 10/10 **Wetsuits:** Lilos  
**Date last checked:** 2023-02-11 **Maps:** Mount Wilson, Wollangambe

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 Fours Lookout, and turn left after about 300m through a gate to the left. Follow this fire trail for 1.5km as it swings west and heads downhill, and then keep straight ahead as the fire trail veers left (SW). Take the foot track that continues straight ahead (west). 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 back into

the creek below the waterfall. Walk down to Du Faur Creek.

Cross Du Faur Creek, climb up on to a ledge and traverse to the right along the ledge until you can scramble up. Continue scrambling up through several small cliff lines up to the knoll, and then head up the ridge to the top of the big hill.

Head W or NW into a creek - the NW one has a couple of very short canyon sections and needs a 10m handline, or possible abseil. Both of these lead into a larger creek, which also has a canyon (Belfry 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, where you turn right and head downstream.

#### Notes

There is a short section of canyon, before a scrubby section through boulders. Below this are a number of canyon sections, the first couple being the longest and most spectacular. There are quite a number of chilly swims, including one of about 200m. Lower down there are some more canyon sections interspersed with creek walking.

At the junction with Du Faur Creek, you can go upstream or downstream.

If you head downstream, 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.

Alternatively head upstream for about 800m through some long pools, and exit left through Joes Canyon. Where the creek splits, follow a track up the left branch up to the saddle.

#### Exit

The track heads up to the top of the saddle, and turns right. The track from Joes Canyon joins after about 600m. The main track then 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. Despite the lack of abseils, Bell Creek involves a fair number of boulder scrambles, and is not a good canyon for beginners. Navigation is reasonably straightforward, although there is an exposed scramble to get out of Du Faur Creek. The canyon is very cold, and wetsuits are recommended, and a thermal top underneath is probably not a bad idea. Some people use lilos to keep warmer. These are best inflated after the boulder scrambling in the main canyon. Otherwise there is a lot of lilo hauling involved. There are some tricky down climbs in the canyon, and some drops in the entry canyons need a handline. Abseiling gear is not normally required.

## Bell Creek Complete Canyon

**Difficulty:** M

**Abseils:** No

**Distance:** 12km

**Quality:** 10/10

**Date last checked:** 2014-11-23

**Time:** 9-12 hours

**Longest abseil:** NA

**Ascent:** 300m

**Wetsuits:** Lilos

**Maps:** Mount Wilson, Wollangambe

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 long stretches of canyon which are spectacular in their own right. The notes given are briefer than normal, 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, or try and make your way in via the side canyon that joins at MGA507895 (20m handline needed).

#### 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 long swims, 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 mild canyon sections higher in the headwaters.

## Clatterteeth Canyon

**Difficulty:** E

**Abseils:** No

**Distance:** 12km

**Quality:** 6/10

**Date last checked:** 2023-03-08

**Time:** 6-10 hours

**Longest abseil:** NA

**Ascent:** 300m

**Wetsuits:** Lilos

**Maps:** Mount Wilson, Wollangambe

Clatterteeth Canyon (also known as Du Faur Creek 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 and named by a party from Sydney Bush Walkers led by Ross Wyborn, in 1964.

### Entry

From the Fire Station at Mt Wilson, head west along the fire trail towards Du Faur's Lookout, and turn left after about 300m through a gate marked with an arrow. Follow this fire trail for almost 2km until it heads downhill and veers left at MGA542886. Take the rough 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. Continue down this creek until you reach the junction with a much larger creek (October Creek). You can usually avoid getting your feet wet until the larger creek.

At this point it may be worth putting on wetsuits. Turn right and wade downstream for about 500m to the first canyon section. This is a good spot to inflate lilos. 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, but probably saves around an hour. 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 are never really sustained. The creek walking is for the most part easy and relatively scrub free, and the surrounds are delightful.

At MGA543906, Joes Canyon comes in from the right, and this can be used as an early exit. It probably saves around an hour and a half. Otherwise continue downstream past Bell Creek on the left. If you have time, the lower section of Bell Creek has good canyon sections.

About 300m after the Bell Creek junction, the creek starts to drop through boulders, and then flattens out before the junction with the Wollangambe. This flat section is slow going, 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 easier going. 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, passing the turnoff to Joes Canyon after 600m. It contours round the gully on the left 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 well-constructed track up the hill, crossing a fire trail, and joining another fire trail. When you reach the road, turn right, and walk back to the Fire Station where you left your car.

### Comments

There are numerous long pools so lilos are advisable for most parties. They are, however, inconvenient in the less canyon-like sections of creek. Experienced parties may be able to do without them, but will need a full wetsuit and possibly thermals underneath. Some other flotation (eg dry bag) is also needed.

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

**Difficulty:** M

**Abseils:** 2-6

**Distance:** 7km

**Quality:** 4/10

**Date last checked:** 2022-10-29

**Time:** 4-7 hours

**Longest abseil:** 20m

**Ascent:** 300m

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Maps:** Mount Wilson, Wollangambe

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

You have the choice of entering from the fire station at Mt Wilson or Cathedral Reserve. Which one is best depends a little on the exit option, though Cathedral Reserve is now probably shorter in all cases. If you are taking one of the shorter exits, it's much of a muchness. If you are going downstream, you should start from Cathedral Reserve.

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 reaches another fire trail. Turn right and follow this for 1km to a junction and large signboard to Wollangambe Canyon and Serendipity Canyon (MGA562904). A foot track goes off to the left. Take this track.

Alternatively, from the NW corner of Cathedral Reserve at Mt Wilson, head along the Northern Fire Trail, that leaves to the west, and passes through private property. After about 1.2km, this forks, and you veer right down a hill on the major branch. After another 400m, and part way up the next hill, there is the track junction and large signboard mentioned above. Turn right on to this track.

Either way, follow the well-constructed track for 400m to an obvious fork with a small sign and a large anthill, where the track to WDWDIITR veers off to the right. 200m past here there is another fork. Left goes to an exit (see below), so take the right fork. This winds around and down into a

side creek at a waterfall.

### Notes

There are a couple of options in the side creek. One is to cross the creek and abseil 15m in two stages down the right of the waterfall. A 30m rope just reaches here. Then there is a 3m abseil from a ledge on the right.

Alternatively you can bypass both abseils on the left and return to the side creek just before it drops into the main creek. However, it seems a slight waste to do it this way.

At the junction with the main creek, there is a 15m drop from trees on the left, which are some way back from the falls. Avoid using anchors on the ledge to the right as they are trampling the roots of the trees and killing them. This drops you in to a fairly wide section of canyon, which opens out after about 200m. From there, there is a pleasant creek walk of around 45min to the main canyon section.

The first drop is 10m from bolts on the left, with some slightly awkward sections. There are ledges to get off from about 8m down. It is not too far to the second drop. This is 7m from bolts on the left, also with a slightly awkward start, and ending in a deep pool. This abseil can sometimes be jumped, but the takeoff point is not easy, and someone will need to check the depth first. The last drop is an easy abseil of 6m into a deep pool from a long sling on the right, 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, at the Wollangambe River.

There are several short swims in the lower section of canyon, but none in the upper section. There is little point in putting wetsuits on until the lower section is reached.

### Exit

There are a number of options for exit. The time assumes one of the first two exits is taken.

The shortest and easiest exit is about 100m upstream, just as the Wollangambe River bends to the left. To get there you can scramble down to the river, and wade upstream until you reach some good ledges for jumping. A path leads up the obvious gully and then up the ridge, where it joins back to the entrance track mentioned above. 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.

Finally, you can go downstream, in which case proceed as for **Wollangambe Lower Tourist Section (Wollangambe 2)**. This probably adds 2-3 hours for moderately experienced parties. Lilos are a good idea, as there is a fair bit of swimming.

### Comments

A nice canyon, although rather short, and with a longish but pleasant creek walk between abseils. It is better known as Serendipity Canyon, but there is already a Serendipity Canyon elsewhere, so I

have given its original name here. While it is often considered a beginner canyon, the abseils (one in particular) are not straightforward, and I would recommend other canyons.

## Lower Bowens Creek North Canyon

**Difficulty:** M

**Abseils:** 2-4

**Distance:** 8km

**Quality:** 8/10

**Date last checked:** 2023-02-12

**Time:** 5-7 hours

**Longest abseil:** 15m

**Ascent:** 370m

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

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 50m past a large anthill (MGA576884, signposted) 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 - check depth. 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  
**Abseils:** 2-6  
**Distance:** 9km  
**Quality:** 8/10  
**Date last checked:** 2012-01-08

**Time:** 7-10 hours  
**Longest abseil:** 15m  
**Ascent:** 370m  
**Wetsuits:** Recommended  
**Maps:** Mount Wilson

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.

A couple 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, followed by some more easy creek walking and then a hand-over-hand or possible jump to start another section of canyon around MGA566868. There may be a couple of swims here. 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:** M  
**Abseils:** 1-7  
**Distance:** 7km  
**Quality:** 9/10  
**Date last checked:** 2022-12-02

**Time:** 5-10 hours  
**Longest abseil:** 20m  
**Ascent:** 230m  
**Wetsuits:** Recommended  
**Maps:** Mount Wilson

The south branch of Bowens Creek has sections of canyon from high up in its headwaters, right down to the junction with the north branch. These notes describe the most commonly visited section of Bowens Creek South Canyon, the so-called upper section (technically it's about the 4th and 5th of around 8 sections!).

### Entry

If you have two cars, and you want to avoid a 3km road walk, park one car near the start of the fire trail at Range Hill on the Bells Line of Road. There is no parking at the fire trail - so either the open area on the S side of the road about 300m E of the start of the fire trail, or the open area on the S side of the road about 600m W 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 faint pad that keeps mostly near 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

MGA544843.

### Notes

It is a short walk to a bit of mild canyon, shortly followed by a 14m drop. This can easily be bypassed on the right, or abseiled if you feel like it. A possible downclimb or short drop may follow, before the canyon proper is reached shortly after.

The first drop is about 9m 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 usually into about waist deep water.

The anchor for the next drop is normally from tapes around a tree high up on the right. This may be up to 20m, depending on the length of the sling from the tapes, but is more likely about 15m. The junction with the main creek (**Corkscrew Canyon** according to Jamieson, but in fact the main branch of Bowens Creek South) coming in from the left is then reached. This is well worth a side trip to explore.

Continuing downstream there is a nice section of canyon, until it opens out into a lovely coachwood and sassafras forest and gorge. The junction with a side creek/canyon is soon reached (**Hand-over-Hand Canyon**). The creek continues to meander for some way before dropping through boulders and then into the next canyon section.

There are quite a few tricky scrambles and drops in this section. The first one is about 6m from tapes around a tree, but there are usually a couple of scrambling routes through gaps in the boulders that will get you down. Some way further downstream there is an awkward abseil of 4m (8m to the anchor) that used to be able to be slid down a log. It is possible, but tricky, to avoid this via a ledge on the right. Another drop of a couple of metres follows immediately.

It is a short walk from here to the junction with Range Creek (**Hobnail Canyon**). It is a good side trip to see the bottom section of Hobnail Canyon. This section of canyon finishes a little way past 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 with ledges. There used to be logs here, but the tree propping them up is now gone post-fires. Carefully climb the bank and up the ledges. Continue this up to the next major cliff line.

Follow the cliff line around to the right for 200m to where it bends sharply left into small gully. This can be climbed through a narrow hole. Go up to the next line of cliffs and right on a track, passing a small waterfall that may have a rope hanging down. Continue around for another 120m until the cliffs break, and you can again scramble up to the next line of cliffs. These cliffs can be scrambled up to the left (easier) or the right. Follow the track up the ridge to the fire trail. Follow the fire trail back to the road, and return to where you left a second car, or otherwise walk back along Bells Line of Road to Pierces Pass (3.0km).

### 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 recommended 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, it is possible to negotiate your way into Corkscrew Canyon which does not require any abseils.

The water levels are quite variable. Many years ago the canyon could be done with only waist deep wades, but presently there are numerous swims and deeper wades. Wetsuits are recommended, though experienced parties may opt to do without.

## Other Wollangambe Canyons

**Dumbano Canyon** - Dumbano Creek has many sections of canyon from high up down to around MGA540001 (Wollangambe). Lots of swimming, and possible short drops in the upper sections. The lower section from (MGA532993) is deep and impressive, starting with an abseil of up to 25m, and has a fair bit of swimming. Exits are fairly obvious. Also some of the tributaries are canyons. A good overnight trip is to descend the southern branch (Cesspit Canyon), a very good canyon despite its unattractive name, and then lower Dumbano Canyon before exiting.

**Yarramun Canyon** - Yarramun Creek has numerous sections of canyon from near its headwaters to down near the Interesting Creek junction (MGA580970, Wollangambe). High up, both the north and south branch are good canyons, with swims and short drops, and an abseil (less than 10m) in the south branch. Below the junction (at MGA513953) there are further good sections of canyon, amidst superb gorge, which require swimming and possible rope use for short drops. Many of the tributaries of Yarramun Creek are good canyons.

**Wollangambe Canyon** - besides the popular tourist sections, the Wollangambe River has canyon sections from high up in the headwaters, down towards Mt Irvine. These are of varying quality, but generally involve swimming. Ropes are not needed for most parts of the river, but a boulder blockup around MGA583925 may need descending gear.

**Du Faur Creek** - Du Faur Creek has other sections of canyon higher up than the well-known section.

**Lower Bowens Creek South** - there are a number of sections of canyon in the south branch of Bowens Creek below the usual exit to the upper section (MGA560856, Mt Wilson). These continue to near the junction with the North Branch. Possible short abseils (less than 10m) and numerous swims. Exit as for Lower Bowens Creek North Canyon.

**Hobnail Canyon (Range Creek)** - intermittent canyon sections from MGA551832 (Mt Wilson) to the Bowens Creek junction, short abseils (up to 15m if the canyon is blocked up), swims.

**Lower Bowens Creek** - canyon conditions continue intermittently below the junction of North and South Bowens, to some way past Waterfall Creek. Swims and a possible abseil. Exits may be tricky to find, but are possible around the major creeks (Waterfall Creek, Zircon Creek, Mill Creek).

## 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.

**Maps (1:25,000):** Mount Wilson

**Access:** The epicentre of the area is the turn-off to Mt Wilson off Bells Line of Road (B59), which is about 15 minutes drive from Mt Wilson. See the Wollangambe section for information on services, food and camping. Driving times are around 15 minutes less.

## Yileen Canyon

**Difficulty:** M

**Time:** 4-7 hours

**Abseils:** 2-4

**Longest abseil:** 40m

**Distance:** 8km

**Ascent:** 210m

**Quality:** 6/10

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Date last checked:** 2021-01-16

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

Yileen Canyon is one of the better canyons on the south side of Bells Line of Road. It features several 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 Bells Line of Road at the end. Alternatively you can try and hitch a lift.

Drive to the Mt Wilson turnoff on Bells Line of Road, and leave the car there. There is a wide pull in area on the south side of the road just past the turnoff. Walk back east towards the top of the hill, and turn right on to a fire trail, which soon turns SSW. After 800m, the fire trail (by this stage more of a track) swings W, then S and up on to the ridge at the 1006 point. Follow the track along this ridge SW, and then S off the end of the ridge between the two branches of Yileen Gully. The track joins the east branch of the creek a short way above the junction.

### Notes

There is a short canyon section just before the junction, and then there is a good section of canyon just below the junction. In the canyon is a short but awkward drop of about 2-3m, just before a 3m slide or climb down a chute (or optionally hand over hand from an anchor some distance back). There are ledges on the right and left in the pool if you want to avoid a swim.

The canyon opens out shortly after, and there is a creek walk to the start of the next canyon section. The next drop is a short way into this section, about 7m, also into a pool, usually followed by a swim. It can be jumped if you check the depth. The swim can be avoided by experienced abseilers. Immediately following this is an awkward 2m drop which can be abseiled on the same rope, or possibly jumped - but the water is shallow and the bottom is rocky. A nice canyon section follows, often with a deep wade or short swim near the end.

The creek opens out again, with some boulder scrambling, before a left hand bend leads into the final section of canyon. There is a short wade or swim, and then an abseil of about 8m from a tree on the left, with the anchor about 8m further back. The canyon opens out shortly after.

Follow the creek down through boulders to the big drop. There are usually a couple of anchor options - the tree to the right is probably an easier abseil, and a cleaner rope pull. The abseil is best done in a couple of stages, about 40m down to a huge boulder, and then 10m from a small tree, or bolts, on the right to the ground. It can also be combined into one abseil if the ropes reach (50m).

### Exit

Head left under the cliff on a track, which leads around and then down into Pierces Creek. Cross the 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. If you only had one car, walk up the fire trail to Bells Line of Road, and turn left to follow it back to your car.

### Comments

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

Depending on water levels there will probably be a couple of deep wades or short swims.

## Wotta Canyon

**Difficulty:** EM

**Time:** 3-5 hours

**Abseils:** 2-3

**Longest abseil:** 25m

**Distance:** 6km

**Ascent:** 180m

**Quality:** 2/10

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Date last checked:** 2003-11-22

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

Wotta Canyon is a short canyon tributary of Birrabang 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 Bells 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

**Time:** 4-6 hours

**Abseils:** 4-6

**Longest abseil:** 25m

**Distance:** 5km

**Ascent:** 250m

**Quality:** 3/10

**Wetsuits:** No

**Date last checked:** 2022-11-18

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

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 2.2km past the Mt Wilson turn-off on the Bells Line of Road, and park just before the overtaking lane starts. Best parking is on the north side at a large clearing at MGA511861 (Mount Wilson). Cross the road, and pick up a track heading into the bush, generally heading SSW. At MGA509854, turn left (SSE) on to a minor track where the main track continues straight ahead. 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, with a second one visible further down the ridge. 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 3m from the bottom, but it is a dodgy scramble.

Better is to abseil from slings about 5m further up the left bank, or from a tree in the creek (about 8m all up). The next drop goes down a sloping crack, over some overhands, and down into an ankle deep pool, about 14m all up. The wade can be avoided by scrambling on small ledges. A slippery slide follows and a rope for a 10m hand over hand or abseil is advisable. A short canyon section follows, starting with a slippery 6m abseil (10m all up) into a waist- to neck-deep pool. It finishes with a final 6m drop into a pool (10m all up) 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, where you can walk off to the right), but the anchor is about 8m back making the start quite tricky.

### 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. There is a faint track that traverses the slope, but this is hard to pick up.

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.

### Comments

A good day out. The creek is nice, though the canyon is somewhat intermittent.

## Birrabang Canyon

**Difficulty:** E

**Time:** 3-5 hours

**Abseils:** No

**Longest abseil:** NA

**Distance:** 6km

**Ascent:** 220m

**Quality:** 2/10

**Wetsuits:** No

**Date last checked:** 2021-12-18

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

Birrabang Brook is a pretty creek, but has only a couple of short sections 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

Drive west along Bells Line of Road for 1.3km past the Mt Wilson turnoff, and park on the north side of the road at a large clearing. Cross the road and pick up a rough track that heads SW for about 50m, and then sharply SE and up on to a high cleared hill with good views. Follow the track generally S down the ridge to where it passes through the first line of cliffs at MGA517851. Swing west and pick your way down to the creek junction at MGA516850. This will probably involve heading upstream on the side creek for a bit until you can get in.

### Notes

The creek is quite enclosed early on, with a canyon section and many overhangs. There are

quite a number of shallow pools to be waded through.

The first obstacle is a chute and slippery ledge on the right. This can be avoided by scrambling along the dirt bank to the left, and down a tree. There is some nice canyon after this.

Another scramble up to the left and down on ledges is needed to avoid a 3m abseil, into another canyon-y section.

Further down the creek there may be a deeper pool that can be avoided by scrambling along a narrow ledge on the left.

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 the left side of the gully, before crossing to the right and heading up to the saddle. From the saddle, climb up to the ridge and pick up a track that leads back to the road, where it is about 800m back to the car.

#### Comments

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

From the saddle on the exit route, it is worth walking 300m SW to the cliffs overlooking Birrabang Brook and the Grose Valley for superb views.

### Dalpura Canyon

**Difficulty:** EM

**Time:** 3-5 hours

**Abseils:** 1-3

**Longest abseil:** 20m

**Distance:** 5km

**Ascent:** 200m

**Quality:** 4/10

**Wetsuits:** Not required

**Date last checked:** 2019-10-20

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

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 and pretty, though not especially 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 vague track to the left (south east) down the ridge. Follow this down to the creek. If you can't find a track, you can simply head south east into the creek, and follow it downstream to the canyon. The canyon starts around MGA502856.

#### Notes

There is a short canyoniferous section, with a deepish pool that can be avoided via ledges high on the left. After a bit of a creek bash, the main canyon starts with a 4m overhung abseil from slings around a rock, or an easy 8m abseil from a tree on the left, into a deep pool. From the left, with

care you can end on a thigh deep ledge from where you can sidle the pool. Some more canyon sections follow. One of these can occasionally fill with logs, and may require use of the rope, though most of the time it will not even be noticed. The end of the canyon is reached with a waterfall of 16m.

The waterfall can optionally be abseiled, but it is easily bypassed on the right. Head left at the cliff line to ledges with excellent views of the Grose Valley.

#### Exit

From the top of the final waterfall, the exit track heads up to the right, to the cliff line. Traverse under the cliff line until it ends, and then 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

**Time:** 4-6 hours

**Abseils:** No

**Longest abseil:** 10m

**Distance:** 6km

**Ascent:** 320m

**Quality:** 1/10

**Wetsuits:** No

**Date last checked:** 2009-10-16

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

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 that heads ESE, 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 MGA482859.

One is to climb up this creek, heading up to the cliff line, and climbing out on to the narrow ridge on the right. This ridge can be followed back to a track at MGA487871, 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

**Time:** 4-6 hours

**Abseils:** 2-3

**Longest abseil:** 15m

**Distance:** 7km

**Ascent:** 250m

**Quality:** 4/10

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Date last checked:** 2023-10-01

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

Koombanda Canyon is an attractive but short 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 east side of the rail line. It is generally 2wd accessible, but is a little rough in some places. Follow this for about 1.7km and park in a clearing.

Alternatively, to avoid the drive on the fire trail, it may be easier to head along Darling Causeway from Bell for 2.9km, turn left on the Canyon Colliery Trail, and park. Walk across the bridge over the railway line, and turn left on the fire trail for 1.5km to the clearing.

Contour around the south side of 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 may be some scrub getting into the trib. Follow the trib down to a waterfall where it enters the main creek, and walk down an easy gully to the left of the drop. There are tapes in a tree to the right, but quite unnecessary. Head down the creek for 400m to the start of the canyon.

### Notes

The first abseil is about 7m, and then there is a swim of about 20m. The second abseil is shortly after. This is up to 13m - but probably more like 8m - from a long sling from a tree high up on the right hand side into a deep dark cleft. You finish in waist deep water. There are also rocks on the ledge from which a cairn anchor could be constructed. The final drop is only about 3m, and can be abseiled or hand-over-handed. It can also be jumped if you check for rocks first. A chilly 10m swim follows, and the canyon ends shortly after.

### Exit

Continue down the creek for 700m until you reach a bridge, at the old colliery. Follow the road back up the hill, with good views of the upper Grose Valley. There is one section that is tricky to negotiate, as the road has been washed away in a landslip. Just before the road crosses the railway line on a bridge, turn right and follow a dirt road back to your car (1.5km). If you had a second car you could drop it at the colliery turnoff if you wanted to save the walk, though it is hardly worth it.

Alternatively you can head up Kamarah Gully and on to Koombanda Ridge or Kamarah 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

**Time:** 2-3 hours

**Abseils:** No

**Longest abseil:** NA

**Distance:** 3km

**Ascent:** 100m

**Quality:** 6/10

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Date last checked:** 2021-12-18

**Maps:** Lithgow, Wollangambe

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, at MGA435928. Follow the sealed road right then left, and then drive along the road alongside the railway until you reach a usually locked gate after about 300m. Turn left on to a fire trail, and then right after about 100m. Follow this road for another 1.1km, avoiding several turnoffs to the left, to a large clearing with a fence. Most vehicles won't get more than about 100m further, so park here.

Follow the fire trail E through a gate for 150m, then left (NE) for 150m over and down the hill to the bottom car park. Turn right (SE) on a rutted out 4wd track down to the lower dam.

Scramble down into the dry creek bed below the dam and follow it through the climbing area to the right.

### Notes

Follow the creek downstream for about 1km. The creek slowly takes on a canyoniferous look. The walking is slow but mostly straightforward in the creek. There may be a track under the western cliffline.

The first section of canyon starts at MGA444911 (Lithgow), with an awkward drop of about 2m, probably with a handline for assistance. This is followed by a short swim.

The main canyon starts not much further on, with a scramble, and a little further on, a climb down a waterfall, probably again with a handline. There are a few short swims. Wetsuits may be useful. Keep an eye out for a waterfall coming in from the right - this is the exit gully. There should be a rope hanging down to climb up. The canyon opens out about 100m past this.

## 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, to the west of the side creek. The ledge is somewhat exposed, although there are usually ropes to hang on to. A track continues above the side creek, until the creek is regained. Continue up the creek for about 80m until you can climb out to the east, and up to the top via some small cliffhops. Once at the very top, pick up the 4wd track which leads back to a junction after 600m. Turn left for 150m back to your car.

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. There are two dams, the lower of which is very popular with locals for swimming. 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.

## Other North Grose Canyons

**Kamarah Canyon** - MGA477871 (Mount Wilson), up to 3 short abseils or hand over hands, possible swim

## 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, though with the new entrance/exit, Ranon should also become more popular as it no longer requires a car shuffle. The lesser known Burumin Canyon (Explorers Brook) and King Georges Brook Canyon also have long canyon sections.

**Maps (1:25,000):** Mount Wilson

**Access:** Access is from Bells Line of Road (B59) past Mt Tomah.

**Camping:** Nearest camping is at Mt Wilson - see Wollangambe section for more info.

**Services:** Nearest petrol is Lithgow or Mt Victoria (west) or Kurrajong (east), about 25mins either way. Nearest supermarkets are Lithgow (west) or North Richmond (east).

**Driving times (to Mt Tomah)**

- from Sydney: 1h 30m

- from Mt Wilson: 25m
- from Katoomba: 40m

## Claustral Canyon

**Difficulty:** M

**Abseils:** 3-6

**Distance:** 9km

**Quality:** 10/10

**Date last checked:** 2023-02-04

**Time:** 8-10 hours

**Longest abseil:** 15m

**Ascent:** 510m

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

Claustral Canyon is one of the most impressive canyons in the Blue Mountains, and indeed, anywhere in Australia. 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

Drive west along Bells Line of Road and park at a large pull in area on the left at MGA583847, just after the road swings sharply right just past Mt Bell. Walk back to the corner and pick up a well-constructed track heading generally SSE and into the gully at MGA588839. There is a large signboard and log book holder about 10m off the road. The track crosses the top of a massive rock outcrop about 100m from the road. Once down in the gully, the track peters out. Continue down the gully with some scrambling into Claustral Brook.

Turn right and walk down the creek for about 10 minutes to the start of the canyon.

## Notes

The canyon starts with a 4m abseil or hand-over-hand off bolts on the right, or slide/jump in on the left (only if the water is very high), usually with a swim. Not long after is another short (2m) jump in, and another swim.

Shortly after, scramble steeply down to the top of the abseils. The first of these is 10m, through a hole. There is a convenient ledge to unclip on - a 17m rope reaches the ledge. After a swim across the pool, the second abseil follows, also 10m, from ring bolts up high on the right. The third abseil (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 the highest quality narrow 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 as you drop into this canyon section, but abseiling can be avoided by finding the right route. Then there is a 7m abseil from bolts high on the right. Immediately after this is the Tunnel Swim, which can sometimes be a wade, but is usually a long cold swim up to 50m through a dark tunnel. The

next drop can be climbed down on the left in low water, but is dangerous in high water, and should be abseiled on the right hand side in those conditions.

About 50m past the 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. Do not continue up the initial exit gully, as it becomes steeper and more dangerous. A yellow and black sign points the way to stop you going too far up. Follow narrow ledges around to Rainbow Ravine and head upstream. There are a few tricky scrambles, and some wades (for those who carry dry socks or shoes).

Where the gully splits higher up, head up the left branch. At the waterfall at the top, walk to the right along the ledge under a small cliffline to the other gully until you get near the creek, and then up a ramp to the left and back over the top to the left gully.

The old route used to continue straight up the left gully via a couple of scrambles, but this is discouraged due to erosion above the waterfall.

From there follow the obvious track up to the Camels Hump. Head down and right to the Camels Saddle, ignoring tracks off to the left, and then up a short way to the next minor saddle at MGA597834. Turn left here, and follow the track steeply downhill until you reach Claustral Brook. There are metal signs pointing the way at two points.

A track can be followed alongside the creek for some way. There are a couple of scrambles and wades before Dismal Dingle comes in on the right. Past the junction with Dismal Dingle, there are a couple of canyon sections, which may involve short swims - though skilled canyoners may avoid these by judicious scrambling and bridging. Shortly after the last of these you reach the exit gully on the right at MGA589837.

An alternate route leaves from the Camels Hump to the end of the ridge at MGA589837, from where 1-2 abseils are required to get back into Claustral Brook just opposite the entry/exit gully. Some routefinding is required.

Head up this gully and back to the car via the route that you came in.

#### **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.

The exit is also quite long. It is likely to take the average party between 3 and 4 hours from near Rainbow Ravine back to their car.

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

**Abseils:** 3-11

**Distance:** 11km

**Quality:** 10/10

**Date last checked:** 2023-02-04

**Time:** 9-11 hours

**Longest abseil:** 30m

**Ascent:** 510m

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

Ranon Canyon is an excellent trip, as it shares some of the best parts of Claustral Canyon and also of Thunder Gorge. With the new entry, it is only a slightly longer day than Claustral.

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, park your car at the Claustral car park at MGA583847 just past Mt Bell.

The shorter way is via Mistake Ravine (this is "Ranon Canyon" in the Jamieson guide). Walk 600m west from the car along Bells Line of Rd to MGA578850 to a grassy open area just past the top of the hill. Walk down the scrubby ridge to the SW, then S. Scramble into the creek at MGA577847. 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 better done as a different way into the system, rather than a canyon to be done in its own right. Walk or drive west for 2km along Bells Line of Rd to just N of the 888 point. Follow the ridge ESE for about 1km to the knoll, and then head S then E down the minor ridge, 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 5m abseil (this used to be a climb down logs, but the logs have been washed away), followed immediately by a 9m abseil. A creek walk and some scrambling leads to a 5m slide to downclimb, or abseil down a chute on the right. Just after this is a 5m abseil into a wide pool, followed by a 15m drop in a couple of stages, and finally 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 about 400m of creek walking to the next canyon section. This starts with a short drop that can be downclimbed or handlined. Immediately after this is the first abseil, from 5m to 9m into a waist deep pool, depending on anchor choice. Then follows a short section of canyon, and then another abseil of 6m. The abseils are both a bit awkward - overhung with chockstones. Just after these, another 3m drop can be slid down a log - this is relatively new, caused by a log jam. 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 or handline down logs into a cavern to the left. From there are two two-stage 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 as you drop into this canyon section, but abseiling can be avoided by finding the right route. Then there is a 7m abseil from bolts high on the right. Immediately after this is the Tunnel Swim, which can sometimes be a wade, but is usually a long cold swim up to 50m through a dark tunnel. The next drop can be climbed down on the left in low water, but is dangerous in high water, and should be abseiled on the right hand side in those conditions.

About 50m past the 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. Do not continue up the initial exit gully, as it becomes steeper and more dangerous. A yellow and black sign points the way to stop you going too far up. Follow narrow ledges around to Rainbow Ravine and head upstream. There are a few tricky scrambles, and some wades (for those who carry dry socks or shoes).

Where the gully splits higher up, head up the left branch. At the waterfall at the top, walk to the right along the ledge under a small cliffline to the other gully until you get near the creek, and then up a ramp to the left and back over the top to the left gully.

The old route used to continue straight up the left gully via a couple of scrambles, but this is discouraged due to erosion above the waterfall.

From there follow the obvious track up to the Camels Hump. Head down and right to the Camels Saddle, ignoring tracks off to the left, and then up a short way to the next minor saddle at MGA597834. Turn left here, and follow the track steeply downhill until you reach Claustral Brook. There are metal signs pointing the way at two points.

A track can be followed alongside the creek for some way. There are a couple of scrambles and wades before Dismal Dingle comes in on the right. Past the junction with Dismal Dingle, there are a couple of canyon sections, which may involve short swims - though skilled canyoners may avoid these by judicious scrambling and bridging. Shortly after the last of these you reach the exit gully on the right at MGA589837.

An alternate route leaves from the Camels Hump to the end of the ridge at MGA589837, from where 1-2 abseils are required to get back into Claustral Brook just opposite the entry/exit gully. Some routefinding is required.

Head up this gully until you reach the constructed track, and follow this back to your car.

#### Comments

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

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.

There are a couple of short swims in Ranon itself, generally only at the final set of abseils. There can be several longer swims in Claustral.

The exit is also quite long. It is likely to take most parties between 3 and 4 hours from near Rainbow Ravine back to their car.

## Thunder Canyon

**Difficulty:** M

**Abseils:** 1-5

**Distance:** 12km

**Quality:** 8/10

**Date last checked:** 2023-02-04

**Time:** 9-11 hours

**Longest abseil:** 20m

**Ascent:** 510m

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

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 tends to be overshadowed by its tributaries Claustral and Ranon as access is more difficult, and the best part of the canyon can be visited from the bottom.

#### Entry

Leave a car at the Claustral car park at MGA583847 just past Mt Bell. Walk (or drive) 2.5km west along Bells Line of Rd to Mt Charles. If you are driving, there is an open area on the right hand side just after the top of the hill to park at, though visibility is poor. A better option may be to park earlier on the at MGA568845, near the 888 point, where the visibility is better. Either way, walk to Mt Charles.

Navigate carefully along Lightning Ridge to near the end where it starts to drop steeply. Make your way down to the south and east to a significant cliffline. Entry into the creek will usually require one or two abseils, up to 25m - some scouting around may be needed to find appropriate spots, as the cliff is quite high in places. Around MGA585825 there is a ramp that may get you fairly close to the creek. Otherwise near the southern point.

A better approach may be to enter the creek higher up, around the creek junction at MGA577830. This avoids some of the scrub on the ridge, but may still require an abseil, and adds a kilometre of creek walking. It also allows the first canyon section mentioned below to be passed through.

### Notes

Depending on where you come in, there is a nice upper section of canyon between MGA584824 and MGA585824

The main canyon section starts downstream at MGA586825. There are a few options for the abseils. A good option is 20m from a tree down the falls to the left, and then 8m down the next section. The first person should check that the crack to the right is not blocked before pulling ropes. Alternatively scramble down the gully to the right (rope may be needed) and do about 20m from a tree.

There is a superb 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 as you drop into this canyon section, but abseiling can be avoided by finding the right route. Then there is a 7m abseil from bolts high on the right. Immediately after this is the Tunnel Swim, which can sometimes be a wade, but is usually a long cold swim up to 50m through a dark tunnel. The next drop can be climbed down on the left in low water, but is dangerous in high water, and should be abseiled on the right hand side in those conditions.

About 50m past the 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. Do not continue up the initial exit gully, as it becomes steeper and more dangerous. A yellow and black sign points the way to stop you going too far up. Follow narrow ledges around to Rainbow Ravine and head upstream. There are a few tricky scrambles, and some wades (for those who carry dry socks or shoes).

Where the gully splits higher up, head up the left branch. At the waterfall at the top, walk to the right along the ledge under a small cliffline to the other gully until you get near the creek, and then up a ramp to the left and back over the top to the left gully.

The old route used to continue straight up the left gully via a couple of scrambles, but this is discouraged due to erosion above the waterfall.

From there follow the obvious track up to the Camels Hump. Head down and right to the Camels Saddle, ignoring tracks off to the left, and then up a short way to the next minor saddle at MGA597834. Turn left here, and follow the track steeply downhill until you reach Claustral Brook. There are metal signs pointing the way at two points.

A track can be followed alongside the creek for some way. There are a couple of scrambles and wades before Dismal Dingle comes in on the right. Past the junction with Dismal Dingle, there are a couple of canyon sections, which may involve short swims - though skilled canyoners may avoid

these by judicious scrambling and bridging. Shortly after the last of these you reach the exit gully on the right at MGA589837.

An alternate route leaves from the Camels Hump to the end of the ridge at MGA589837, from where 1-2 abseils are required to get back into Claustral Brook just opposite the entry/exit gully. Some routefinding is required.

Head up this gully until you reach the constructed track, and follow this back to your car.

### Comments

The canyon is very good but is not that long given the walk in. It is worth going up Claustral some way to have a look at the main canyon section there.

There are a few short swims in Thunder, depending on sand movement. There are about three longer swims in Thunder Gorge below the Claustral junction, including the Tunnel Swim.

The exit is also quite long. It is likely to take most parties between 3 and 4 hours from near Rainbow Ravine back to their car.

## Other Carmarthen Canyons

**Explorers Brook (Burumin Canyon)** - Explorers Brook has a number of sections of canyon, which continue below the junction with King George Brook. There are some possible short drops and one longer abseil before the junction with King George Brook that can be done in stages, up to 20m long. Numerous swims, some long. Exits are difficult - one option for an overnight trip is to reverse Carmarthen Brook to the Claustral exit, but this is not easy. Another is to continue down to the vicinity of Tomah or Tallara Creeks, where the clifflines become less continuous. A good two day trip.

**King George Brook (Caley Canyon)** - like Explorers Brook, King George Brook has a number of sections of canyon from around MGA572809 (Mt Wilson). A few abseils and swims. As for Explorers Brook, exits are difficult. It may be possible to exit to the north near the junction with Explorers Brook.

## 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 Hat Hill 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, Hat Hill Canyon, Fortress Canyon and Mt Hay Canyon.

**Maps (1:25,000):** Mount Wilson, Katoomba

**Access:** The canyons are accessed via various fire trails that lead off the north side of the main western ridge through the Blue Mountains, near Leura, Katoomba and Blackheath. This is the same ridge that the Great Western Highway (A32), the major east-west road through the mountains runs along.

**Camping:** There is easy access to food and services, but free camping is limited. Primitive camping is possible off Mt Hay Rd, near the trackheads for Fortress and Mt Hay Canyons, out of

Leura. There are a small number of (free) official camping sites at Perrys Lookdown, at the end of Hat Hill Rd at Blackheath. There is also a (free) official camping area on the south side of Blackheath, at Blackheath Glen, on the Megalong Valley Rd.

If you are feeling flush, there is plenty of accommodation in the three towns, from hostels to resorts, and a private campground in Katoomba.

**Services:** There are large supermarkets in Katoomba and Leura.

Katoomba also has a number of outdoor gear stores (Summit Gear, Paddy Pallin, Mountain Designs), and is the only place you will be able to get technical gear in the upper Blue Mountains.

#### **Driving times (to Katoomba)**

- from Sydney: 1h 30m
- from Leura: 5m
- from Blackheath: 15m

## **Fortress Canyon**

**Difficulty:** EM

**Time:** 4-6 hours

**Abseils:** 1-2

**Longest abseil:** 10m

**Distance:** 8km

**Ascent:** 180m

**Quality:** 5/10

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Date last checked:** 2023-01-05

**Maps:** Katoomba

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, continue past an overgrown fire trail and on to a foot track. At the top of the ridge after about 500m, turn right on to a track that leads down the ridge to the NE, and follow this down to the creek at MGA553747. This is a good spot to put wetsuits on.

### **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, some quite long.

The abseil is shortly into a third section of canyon, which can be done from bolts on either side of

the 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 is 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. Unfortunately it has been recently popularised by the Instagram crowd, and can often be crowded.

### **Exit**

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

## **Mt Hay Canyon**

**Difficulty:** MH

**Time:** 5-8 hours

**Abseils:** 4-9

**Longest abseil:** 20m

**Distance:** 5km

**Ascent:** 240m

**Quality:** 6/10

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Date last checked:** 2023-02-17

**Maps:** Katoomba, Mount Wilson

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**

The entry route has recently changed to avoid crossing a hanging swamp. There is a sign board at the car park with a map showing the new route, described below.

Drive to the end of the Mt Hay Rd at MGA590758 (Katoomba). Follow the main track to the north until it branches after 200m, and take the left branch. Continue for another 250m until you reach signs indicating the track to the canyon on the left. Follow this down the ridge to the south. You should reach the cliff line at a 3m corner, with a log book. The corner can be climbed down. Use a rope if necessary as a handline. Continue down to the creek, and follow it down to the first abseil. There are 4 drops up to 15m in the creek itself. The second (2m) can be combined with the first with a long enough rope, or bypassed via ledges on the right. The fourth can also be avoided by crossing over the small creek and scrambling down the ridge opposite.

Once in the main creek (Rocky Points Creek) make your way downstream. There is a bit of scrambling, and one place where a rope can be used to hand over hand or abseil. There is also a fairly straightforward scramble to avoid this. Immediately after this drop, a 20m swim marks the beginning of the canyon, and the ledge above is a good place to put wetsuits on.

## Notes

There are a couple of swims, and then the first drop in the canyon is reached. This is about 9m from a tree on the right, or jump into the pool (check depth). Scramble down slippery boulders 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. Use a safety line while you are on the chockstone. The second pitch is typically done in front of the chockstone, but can also be done behind, though behind 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 down a sloping waterfall looks high, but can be scrambled down on the left via a series of ledges. There is an optional waterjump near the bottom. There are also slings on the right. There is another couple of hundred metres of scrambling and boulder hopping, before a final 12m abseil from the left of the waterfall.

## Exit

There are several options for exiting.

The most common involves a short but exposed rockclimb to connect two sections of track.

From the bottom of the final abseil, climb directly up to the cliffline on the right, and follow the cliffline around to the left. This descends down into a gully, then very steeply up the gully. There is then a small downhill, followed by a more gradual uphill, passing a couple of ledges, until you can get up to a wide ledge. Follow the ledge back to the right for 300m (becoming exposed), through a cave, to the start of the climb. The climb has 5 fixed hangers and double ring bolt belay at the top of about 8m of climbing, so is very well protected. It is around grade 10, so while not too hard, the holds are dusty and worn, and climbing without proper shoes is tricky. It is also quite exposed.

At the top, head around to the right to climb a steep eroded gully that leads to a saddle. There is a superb lookout to the right, with views back into the canyon. Otherwise head left and follow the track up until you can find your way back to the car.

The non-climbing exit is very rarely done these days. It probably adds around 4 hours to the day. It 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.

## Comments

While the canyon itself is very short, Mt Hay Canyon is still an excellent day of adventure, involving many abseils, possible jumps, great views and a rock climb in imposing position. The canyon is very popular, and this can lead to long delays at the main abseils, and also at the exit climb.

Any more than about three or four people on the chockstone will be a tight squeeze, and make it awkward to operate.

## Grand Canyon

**Difficulty:** EM

**Abseils:** 1

**Distance:** 5km

**Quality:** 9/10

**Date last checked:** 2020-02-02

**Time:** 3-5 hours

**Longest abseil:** 20m

**Ascent:** 280m

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Maps:** Katoomba

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.

Either way, a large set of bolts and chains marks the entry point to the canyon.

## 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. Alternatively, you can just swim the various pools and get wet.

The compulsory 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 sign with directions to Neates Glen and Evans Lookout, just before a side creek comes in from the right. 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 4<sup>th</sup> edition guide fell down a number of years ago. The abseil is now 17m (not 12m as per Jamieson's 5<sup>th</sup> edition).

## Jugglers Canyon

**Difficulty:** EM

**Abseils:** 3-7

**Distance:** 5km

**Quality:** 4/10

**Date last checked:** 2022-09-03

**Time:** 3-4 hours

**Longest abseil:** 20m

**Ascent:** 270m

**Wetsuits:** No

**Maps:** Katoomba

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 if you are careful, 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 - around 6 hours.

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:

1. Stay right at 2.4km as you pass a sealed road on the left
2. Veer left at 3.4km at the airport
3. Turn left at 4.2km onto a narrow track - at a triangular metal sign pointing to electricity tower No 20
4. 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 as it passes under power lines and becomes a single track. After about 300m further, you will see a large live tree with a couple of holes burnt by fire in the trunk. Turn right here onto a faint track, possibly marked with a yellow and black arrow, which leads you down to the creek. There are more yellow and black arrows to follow, to keep erosion and new track formation to a minimum.

### Notes

To avoid erosion, keep to the track that stays on the west bank until the creek starts dropping. After this the track becomes less defined. A 4m waterfall is soon reached, and can be scrambled, hand-over-handed or abseiled (12m from the anchor). About 100m further on are a couple of optional abseils in and to the right of the creek - these can both be scrambled around on the left.

Another 100m or so brings you to the start of the canyon section.

The canyon starts with a 9m drop into a pool, from a sling around a high branch. Veer right (facing downstream) at the bottom on to narrow ledges if you want to avoid wading/swimming. Immediately there is a 5m drop down a waterfall (9m from the anchor), though it is worth using a longer rope and staying on as the next section of creek is very slippery. There are bolts on the ledge on the left for an alternative abseil anchor.

Then there is a hand-over-hand or abseil of about 4m under a big log wedged in the creek. The final overhanging abseil is about 20m, from bolts along ledges to the left. It has a steep start. Alternatively, continue down a couple of short drops in the creek (rope may be used) and do a 12m abseil 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.

If you are doing Grand Canyon as well, follow the signs towards Neates Glen. The track climbs up a set of steps and then along a ledge above the canyon for around 15 minutes to the anchor point, a large set of bolts and chains.

Otherwise, the Pilcher Track (fairly faint) starts immediately back across the side creek from the signpost, just under the power lines. It zigzags steeply up the cliff line, crossing a section of landslip near the bottom. There are a few false leads in place, when it hits the minor cliff lines. Once through the cliff lines, there is a short side track out to a good lookout high above Greaves Creek and Beauchamp Falls. The track then continues up the ridge, then up the side of the gully (Jugglers) that you have just descended, and back to your car.

### Comments

Depending on which map edition you have, the Pilcher Track may or may not be marked correctly. The fire trail marked on all maps forks about 200m down, which is where you park. One branch heads NNE, the other NE. The Pilcher Track is the NE trail, which turns into a foot track heading N when it reaches the power lines. It is also possible to follow the NNE fire trail to Electricity Tower 20, and then pick up a less obvious track heading ENE to join up with the Pilcher Track.

## Hat Hill Canyon

**Difficulty:** E

**Abseils:** No

**Distance:** 8km

**Quality:** 7/10

**Date last checked:** 2015-11-27

**Time:** 5-7 hours

**Longest abseil:** NA

**Ascent:** 230m

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

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

Turn off the Great Western Highway on to Hat Hill Rd at Blackheath. Drive along Hat Hill Road to where it turns sharply right after 3.1km, and after a further 500m, turn left in to Godson Ave (unsealed), 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 at the creek junction.

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

It is well worth continuing down the creek for another 200m to the impressive Hat Hill Falls, where the creek tumbles into the valley below.

### 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

**Time:** 5-7 hours

**Abseils:** No

**Longest abseil:** NA

**Distance:** 12km

**Ascent:** 240m

**Quality:** 3/10

**Wetsuits:** No

**Date last checked:** 2015-04-24

**Maps:** Mount Wilson

Crayfish Creek lies off Burrumoko 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 0.8km to a locked gate.

Park here and walk along the main fire trail to MGA503792, just before Burrumoko Hill, and head west down the ridge, and then NW into the creek at the creek junction.

### Notes

The short canyon section starts at MGA497798. 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 MGA 502804. 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.

## Other South Grose Canyons

There are sections of canyon in Victoria Creek and Victoria Brook, as well as in some of the tributaries of Crayfish Creek and Hat Hill Creek. No details are given to allow people to explore for themselves.

## 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.

**Maps (1:25,000):** Katoomba

**Access:** Empress Canyon is in Wentworth Falls, only a short drive from Katoomba. See the South Grose region for information on camping, food and services.

**Driving times (to Wentworth Falls)**

- from Sydney: 1h 25m
- from Katoomba: 5m

## Empress Canyon

**Difficulty:** EM

**Abseils:** 1

**Distance:** 2km

**Quality:** 6/10

**Date last checked:** 2020-02-02

**Time:** 2-3 hours

**Longest abseil:** 30m

**Ascent:** 200m

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Maps:** Katoomba

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 alongside the creek on the right. Continue past Lilians Bridge (where you can look down into the canyon) staying on the right until you reach stepping stones across Valley of the Waters Creek. This is the start of the canyon. There is a log book to fill in, so that crowding can be minimised.

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 car park.

### 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.

The canyon is heavily used by commercial groups. The peak time is between about 12pm and 2:30pm on weekends, and if you reach the abseil around those times then you may have a significant wait. To avoid crowding, it's advisable to get going fairly early in the morning (say before 10am) or wait til mid-to-late-afternoon (after 3:30pm).

## Other Jamison Valley Canyons

Some of the creeks on Kings Tableland flowing in to the Jamison Valley have sections of canyon. No details are given to allow people to explore for themselves.

### 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. Kalang Falls is a good trip, and Dione Dell is a relatively easy canyon, and popular as it doesn't require swimming.

**Maps (1:25,000):** Kanangra, Yerranderie

**Access:** Kanangra Walls is a hard 220km drive from Sydney, particularly on a Friday night, as many parties do. Without stops, expect to take 3 to 3 1/2 hours.

Take the Great Western Highway through the Blue Mountains and take the Jenolan Caves Road turnoff to the left at Hartley, which is signposted not far past the big downhill at Mt Victoria. Past Hampton, the road via Jenolan Caves is steep and windy, and not pleasant at all. At the T-intersection on the far side of the caves, take the left turn to Kanangra Walls. The last 30km or so to Kanangra Walls themselves are on dirt road, which varies in quality, but is normally fine for 2wd vehicles.

An alternative route that avoids Jenolan Caves is to take a right turn towards Oberon at Hampton. Turn left on Titania Rd about 5km short of Oberon (signposted) and then follow the signs to Kanangra Walls. This route adds about 12km, but takes a similar time and avoids the narrow winding section through the Jenolan Caves.

**Camping:** Camping is at the Boyd River Campground, about 6km, back from Kanangra Walls. There are pit toilets, fire rings and a shelter shed.

**Services:** Nearest food and services are at Oberon.

### Driving times

- from Sydney: 3h 10m
- from Katoomba: 1h 40m
- from Oberon: 50m

## Davies Canyon

**Difficulty:** H

**Abseils:** 7-11

**Distance:** 20km

**Quality:** NA

**Date last checked:** 2002-12-26

**Time:** 14-20 hours (2 days)

**Longest abseil:** 50m

**Ascent:** 820m

**Wetsuits:** Not required

**Maps:** Kanangra

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 (MGA287400) 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 MGA330417 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.

## Carrabeanga Falls

**Difficulty:** H

**Abseils:** 13-20

**Distance:** 19km

**Quality:** NA

**Date last checked:** 2012-05-06

**Time:** 13-19 hours (2 days)

**Longest abseil:** 50m

**Ascent:** 980m

**Wetsuits:** No

**Maps:** Kanangra

Carrabeanga Falls (often written Carra Beanga) is a spectacular but remote trip in the most rugged part of the Kanangra-Boyd Wilderness. Like most of the Kanangra canyons, it is more of an abseiling trip, though there is a deep gorge below the main falls that contains many of the abseils. It is usually done as a two day trip, and indeed, many parties do not even reach Kanangra Creek on the first day, and are forced to overnight in the gorge.

### Entry

Park at the locked gate at the start of the King Pin Fire Trail (MGA287400) 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. Navigate on to Burra Gunama Ridge, walk down to Burra Gunama Hill and descend north into the creek and then down the creek to the falls.

### Notes

The first four abseils can be done on the left hand side of the falls. Each is less than 20m.

This brings you to a wide rock ledge at the top of the main falls, which are about 110m high. The falls can be abseiled on either side, but the right is probably easier. Cross the creek on the ledge and scramble down the ridge on the right for about 30m. A short abseil to a ledge is followed by two 40m+ abseils from large gum trees to get to the bottom of the main falls. The intermediate abseil points may involve traversing on the rope to reach.

Below the main falls, the creek drops into a narrow gorge. There are around 6 abseils, generally short (10-20m) apart from the first, which is 28m from the obvious tree below the main falls. There are usually multiple anchor choices. Many of the waterfalls go down chutes into pools. It is possible to stay dry, but in some cases this involves exposed scrambling along narrow and loose ledges to get to an anchor that will take you beyond the pool.

At the end of this section, there is a larger waterfall. There are several anchors close to the falls, for two longer abseils. For a dry option, there is a large gum tree about 50m to the left and down a dirt/loose scree slope, a 12m abseil. A short walk down to the right takes you to the bottom of the falls.

There is one more large abseil, a 42m abseil ending in a waist deep pool.

At this point the creek turns sharply left. From here it is about an hour's walk to the Kanangra Creek junction. There are several short drops along the way, some of which may need abseils.

### Exit

There are numerous options for exiting. One of the quickest is to climb up the ridge to the north of

the junction of Carrabeanga Brook and Kanangra Creek, to Mt Cyclops. Follow Thurat Ridge back to the fire trail and along the fire trail to the road.

Alternatively, exit via Gunama Steeps, or walk up Kanangra Creek and up a ridge to Mt Berry. The latter needs a vehicle at the Walls car park.

### Comments

Carrabeanga is a serious undertaking, and should not be underestimated. Routefinding and anchor choice is difficult, particularly on the bigger abseils, as it is not obvious what the rebelay options are. This can often involve traversing on scree slopes above large drops. Loose rocks are an ever-present issue, and helmets are strongly advised. Party size should be kept small, for safety, speed, camping options and space on small ledges.

An early start is needed to get through the abseils before camping. Depending on route choice and scrambling ability, there are anywhere from 15-20 abseils. Many parties do not make it through in a day, and are forced to camp in the gorge.

While it is often considered a dry trip, it is hard to avoid knee deep wades in the lower gorge, and a waist deep wade is likely. Depending on the water level and wind, spray from the larger waterfalls may also get you wet. A light rainjacket may be handy. Parties considering doing this as a winter trip should already be familiar with the canyon.

Campsites in the gorge are few and small. The best options are:

- a large flat ledge to the left at the bottom of the main falls that a small party could bivvy
- a larger flat area after the 42m abseil

Best is to reach Kanangra Creek, where there is a decent spot for a number of tents about 50m north of the Carrabeanga Brook / Kanangra Creek junction.

## Danae Brook Canyon

**Difficulty:** H

**Abseils:** 10-15

**Distance:** 13km

**Quality:** 9/10

**Date last checked:** 2010-02-20

**Time:** 10-18 hours

**Longest abseil:** 35m

**Ascent:** 640m

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Maps:** Kanangra

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 MGA328377 (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

**Abseils:** 11-15

**Distance:** 6km

**Quality:** NA

**Date last checked:** 2023-01-14

**Time:** 8-12 hours

**Longest abseil:** 60m

**Ascent:** 520m

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Maps:** Kanangra

Kanangra Main is a spectacular trip descending one of the steeper gorges of Kanangra-Boyd. It starts with several pitches of abseiling beside the 150m high Kanangra Falls, in Kanangra Creek,

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 of the 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.

Either scramble down a short exposed gully to the right of the creek and left to ledges below the first waterfall, or abseil 10m from a tree on the true right just above the falls. The first set of anchors are on the edge about 10m to the right of the falls.

### Notes

The first three to five 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. To avoid rope jam issues, it may be better to abseil 15m to a very small (3 person) ledge with bolts and reset for 39m abseil to the next ledge.

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

There are abseil options on both sides of the pinnacle.

From the right side, 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.

From the left side, it is 37m down to a small ledge, where there is an anchor for a 15m abseil straight down the fall - difficult and dangerous in high water.

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, with the main bolts on a ledge on the right. It is about 47m, finishing on the right hand side. There is also an intermediate anchor on the right.

A scramble/swim and short walk leads to the next drop, which involves an abseil of 12m or possible scramble down, on the right, 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 - pulldown

might be difficult. Alternatively, do a 7m jump from the top of the chockstone, after checking depth. The water is not particularly deep, so be careful.

Another short walk leads to the next big drop, which is done in two parts. Abseil about 15m from slings on the left across the falls to a set of bolts on the right. Then abseil 56m down the right of the falls across a big greasy ledge, and down to a pool below. If your ropes are too short, there may be 17m abseil from the greasy ledge, using a somewhat dodgy setup involving a piton and bollard.

A short walk again gets to the next abseil, which goes from bolts on the left, about 45m down a slippery waterfall - the most photogenic of the trip. The pulldown is difficult due to the flow. 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 (15m) which can be abseiled from bolts on the right, or scrambled around on the left.

The next waterfall (25m) is abseiled from slings around a tree on ledges on the left, or from bolts on the right. 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, or the right, or abseiled (15m).

### Exit

From here it is about 40 minutes of rockhopping and scrambling down to Murdering Gully (MGA334360), which is the gully leading up to the saddle between Seymour Top and Mt Kanangra. 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.

An alternative exit (Manslaughter Ridge) leaves from the same spot, but climbs the steep spur to the west of Murdering Gully. It is very steep and loose in places, and there is a high risk of knocking rocks down on climbers behind.

## Kalang Falls

**Difficulty:** M

**Abseils:** 8-10

**Distance:** 4km

**Quality:** NA

**Date last checked:** 2016-08-21

**Time:** 7-10 hours

**Longest abseil:** 50m

**Ascent:** 520m

**Wetsuits:** No

**Maps:** Kanangra

Kalang Falls is a series of big waterfalls in the confusingly named Kanangra Brook (different to Kanangra Creek). The trip is a pleasant one that descends one of the easier Kanangra gorges. Despite this it is not a trip to be taken lightly. There are many abseils, the quartzite rock becomes very slippery when wet, and there is a long steep climb out up Murdering Gully to finish.

Most of the abseils go down beside the waterfalls. There are no swims, and you may even be able to keep your feet dry with care. The trip can be done in winter, though the short days mean that parties will need to be fast-moving.

Two 60m ropes (not shorter) is ideal for the big waterfall, to have both ~30m pitches rigged.

## Entry

From the car park at Kanangra Walls, follow the track to the lookouts and on down the stairs to Kalang Falls. Head downstream, ending up on the right hand side as it opens out, taking extra care on the rock slabs. There is an awkward, slightly dangerous, 2m climb down on to a sloping ledge, just before the first abseil. This may be best negotiated on your stomach.

## Notes

The first abseil is about 38m from a large casuarina tree on the right. There may be another anchor some distance back off a small tree - this could be used if desired to reach the main anchor.

Walk 50m down the creek to the next drop. Use a hand line to scramble down the first couple of ledges, then abseil 40m from bolts on the right to a pool. Scrambling the first ledges makes for an easier pull-down.

Scramble down the next small fall on the left, and then up and out a short way on the left side, before heading down a very minor ridge on dirt to a large gum tree 15m to the left of the falls for a 27m abseil. A handline is useful to reach the anchor, which is on the edge of a steep dirt bank. The abseil ends next to the old log book container. The next abseil is almost immediate, a 45m abseil on the left from a bolt and trees.

Walk downstream for 100m and then scramble down on the left to a 12m abseil. Another walk of about 50m leads to an 18m abseil, also on the left. It is possible to scramble around these abseils, though not recommended, as the slopes are loose and unstable.

Walk slightly up to the left to the next anchor, a large gum, and abseil 29m down a ramp above a pool. There is also an anchor closer to the falls that may deposit you in the pool.

This is followed by the big waterfall. There are two abseils of 26m and 27m down the left of the falls, both from double ring bolts. Alternatively with full 60m ropes these can be combined into one abseil.

Avoid the next small falls by heading slightly up and then across a scree slope, until you can get back down to the creek. At the big falls, head along a narrow ledge to the left past a big drop for the final abseil from a large tree. This is 40m to a pool, and the first person is likely to get wet up to waist deep unless they are careful. Subsequent abseilers can be pulled across by the first person.

## Exit

It is a short walk from there to Kanangra Creek. The exit is up Murdering Gully, which is another 50m downstream. Climb Murdering Gully, and then steeply up spurs on the left when the gully gets steep and overgrown. Traverse right near the top to reach the saddle between the walls.

## Comments

Kalang Falls is a dry trip in normal conditions, and can be done in winter. It is inadvisable after rain, as the quartzite rock is very slippery and dangerous.

For a summer trip, there are alternate anchors that go down the waterfalls. Wetsuits may be a good idea if you take this option.

## Dione Dell Canyon

**Difficulty:** EM

**Abseils:** 0-4

**Distance:** 6km

**Quality:** NA

**Date last checked:** 2016-08-20

**Time:** 5-7 hours

**Longest abseil:** 35m

**Ascent:** 270m

**Wetsuits:** No

**Maps:** Yerranderie, Kanangra

Dione Dell is a pleasant trip, and the easiest of the Kanangra canyons. However, it should not be underestimated. The slippery and sometimes loose quartzite rock has the potential to be quite dangerous in the wet.

At normal water levels there is just one waist deep wade, and some otherwise shallow creek crossings. The abseils go down beside the waterfalls, so wetsuits are not needed.

For a summer trip, there are alternate anchors that go down the waterfalls, often ending in the pools, which may involve a swim. Wetsuits may be a good idea if you take this option.

## Entry

Park at the Thurat Fire Trail, 2.5km back from Kanangra Walls. Pick up a foot track that leaves from the Kanangra Road immediately opposite the Thurat Fire Trail, and follow it down into Dione Dell after about 200m. Follow the creek downstream for 1km (about 40 minutes) to the first abseil. There is a vague track which meanders from bank to bank, sometimes climbing as high as 15m above the creek, but it is easy to lose. In general, keep to the inside bank. The first abseil is at the Christys Creek junction, and you need to be on the right hand side of Dione Dell at this point.

## Notes

The first abseil is about 33m from a large tree on a ledge, down to the junction of the two creeks. If you only have a single 60m rope, the last few metres can be scrambled. Traverse around the pool on the left.

The second abseil is about 50m downstream, also from a tree on the left, and is about 27m. The abseil crosses the creek and then descends the right hand side of the falls. The old anchor mentioned in earlier track notes was further left again, but this tree has since fallen down. There is also an obvious anchor on tree well to the right of the falls, for a scrubby abseil.

There is a creek walk of about 30 minutes to the next abseil. Scramble down ledges to the right of the falls (or use a rope to hand over hand, about 23m) to a big tree on a ledge. From there, the 25m abseil goes down a chute next to the waterfall, ending on a slippery ledge. Exiting off this ledge requires a wade next to the wall on the right hand side, which is knee to waist deep (or a swim if you slip in!)

Another 100m brings you to the final abseil. To get to the old anchor involved scrambling down ledges just to the right of the falls, then along a sloping ledge to a small gum tree out on a point. This tree is now somewhat damaged, so it may be better to use an alternative anchor. The best option is to climb out to the right as the creek starts to drop, and up to an obvious big gum tree for a 32m abseil. This brings you down just to the right of the pool.

If needed, it is possible to avoid all of the abseils by scrambling around and down the right hand

side.

### Exit

Wander down the creek for 600m (about 30 minutes) to the impressive Margaret Falls (110m). Climb up the ridge to the left of the falls, again on a vague track, and continue up to the obvious cliff line and point of Pindari Tops, on the north side of Pindari Gap. Continue east following the cliff line around past the distinctive Uranus Grotto and up the next gap, Wallaby Pass (Pindari Pass on the old Dunphy Sketch Map). At the top of the pass, follow a track through thick scrub for 1.5km back to the Kanangra Road. Turn left, and it is 900m along the road back to the car.

### Comments

Dione Dell is a fairly dry trip, and can be done outside summer, even in winter if you are prepared to put up with a couple of chilly wades.

## Other Kanangra Canyons

**Thurat Rift** - MGA340398 (Kanangra), 15+ abseils to 50m, swims but can be avoided, typically 2 days, very hard

**Arabanoo Creek** - MGA333343 (Kanangra), around 5 abseils up to 40m, probable short swims or wades

**Wheengee Whungee Creek** - MGA290316 (Yerranderie), 8-15 abseils to 50m, short swims that can be avoided with some difficulty, typically 2 days

**Middle Christys Creek** - MGA317329 (Yerranderie), 8-10 abseils up to 40m, swims, typically 2 days

## 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.

**Maps (1:25,000):** Bungonia, Caoura

**Access:** The main road access to Bungonia National Park (formerly Bungonia State Conservation Area) is fairly well signposted from both Goulburn and Marulan. From Sydney, head south west on the Hume Highway and take the exit just south of Marulan, passing straight through the roundabout. At the next T-intersection after 16km turn left to the town of Bungonia, and then left just past the middle of town. The National Park is about 10km down the road.

**Camping:** There is a national parks campground at Bungonia, which includes hot showers. Fees apply.

**Services:** Nearest services are on the Hume Hwy (M31) at Marulan. Nearest supermarket and other shops are at Goulburn.

### Driving times

- from Sydney: 2h
- from Goulburn: 25m
- from Marulan: 15m

## Long Gully Canyon

**Difficulty:** M

**Abseils:** 8-10

**Distance:** 8km

**Quality:** NA

**Date last checked:** 2011-07-23

**Time:** 7-9 hours

**Longest abseil:** 60m

**Ascent:** 550m

**Wetsuits:** No

**Maps:** Caoura

Long Gully Canyon is a series of abseils down Long Gully into the Shoalhaven River. The highlight is the second abseil, nearly 60m into an amphitheatre. Like most of the Bungonia canyons, the rock is quartzite, some of it quite loose.

### Entry

From Bungonia, head out of town on the Lookdown Road for 6.2km, and turn right on to a fire trail which leaves the road between two sections of private property. After 400m you reach a small national park sign and a parking area. From here the road gets rougher and 2wd cars may have some difficulty. You could park here and walk the 2km in. Otherwise, continue through an open gate, along and up a rough and eroded section of fire trail, and through another gate into the national park at MGA263410. It is another 1km of easier going to the parking area at the junction of the Stan Jones Fire Trail and the Trestle Track, at MGA271413.

From the car park, walk east along the Stan Jones Fire Trail, crossing over Long Gully after about 15 minutes. Head along the ridge above the creek until the next creek junction at MGA277400 to avoid some scrub in the creek. Continue down the creek, with a few small scrambles, to the first drop at MGA284398.

### Notes

There are about 10 main drops, and numerous short drops which can be scrambled.

The first abseil is about 8m, with an anchor about 5m back on the left. There is then a walk/scramble of about 500m to the main abseil. This is about 56m from a tree on the left.

Some more walking and scrambling leads to another abseil of about 8m from a tree up on the left.

The remaining abseils come fairly thick and fast. The fourth drop is again about 8m from roots on the left. Then there is a drop of about 6m down a chute into a pool (wet feet). However, it may be easier to scramble down just to the right of the falls. The sixth drop is a nice one, into another amphitheatre, about 20m from trees in the middle of the creek. The seventh drop is a little further on, fairly short, about 5m. The eighth drop follows immediately, and is about 20m into a slot from a tree on the right. There are pools at the bottom but these can be easily avoided. A little walk leads to the ninth drop, another short one, about 5m from a tree in the middle. Finally the tenth drop is about 5m, but is probably easier to scramble on the left (or right).

A short walk brings you out to the Shoalhaven.

### Exit

The easiest exit is to walk downstream for about 500m to a steep ridge at MGA291407 that leads up to the Trestle Track. Turn left once you reach the Trestle Track and it is about 2km back to the cars. Alternatively walk another 1.3km further downstream and walk up the Trestle Track, marked with blue markers.

### Comments

There are no swims, and you are unlikely to even get your feet wet, so it can be done at any time of year. Unless there has been recent rain, most of the creek is likely to be bone dry. There is a lot of loose rock, and parties need to be careful to manage this. Helmets are strongly recommended. In dry weather, some of the main drops can be scrambled by experienced parties.

## Bungonia Creek Canyon

**Difficulty:** M

**Time:** 8-11 hours

**Abseils:** 2-6

**Longest abseil:** 60m

**Distance:** 8km

**Ascent:** 360m

**Quality:** NA

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Date last checked:** 2013-11-02

**Maps:** Bungonia, Caoura

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 1.2km to the first drop. This is labelled Bungonia Falls on the topo, but is probably incorrect.

### Notes

Note that two of the longer abseils end in pools. Abseil lengths are conservative - the drops may be shorter when the pools are full.

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:

1. Climb around the right to a large gum tree and abseil from bolts on the boulder next to it 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, it is possible but difficult to climb

down.

2. Abseil about 25m from a large casuarina on the left hand side down to a double bolt anchor (hard to spot), and re-rig for another 45m abseil.
3. Scramble down on the left hand side to a lower casuarina and abseil 60m to the base of the falls.

At this point you can take exit (2) below (the "quick exit" in Jamieson). However, it is better to continue down the creek.

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 for a 45m abseil. If the pool is empty it may be difficult to get out. Swim across the pool.

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. The time estimate assumes you are taking the first exit.

1. The straightforward, but longer option is to 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. The shorter option - not really recommended - is to climb the ridge between Bungonia Creek. Scramble up the steep slope on your left about 50m downstream from 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. Once on the ridge, follow the Yellow Track back to the campground.

### 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

**Time:** 8-11 hours

**Abseils:** 4-10

**Longest abseil:** 50m

**Distance:** 9km

**Ascent:** 360m

**Quality:** NA

**Wetsuits:** Optional

**Date last checked:** 2021-04-17

**Maps:** Bungonia, Caoura

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 rock is slippery when wet, and the canyon is best avoided in these conditions, as a number of the anchors are on sloping ledges.

### Entry

Start from the north-west corner of the campground in Bungonia NP, just before the campground road passes the water tanks.

Follow the Green and Yellow Tracks until they branch, and then left along the Yellow Track down to Bungonia Creek. Cross the creek and climb up on to the ridge on the other side. Continue along the Yellow Track to a fenced lookout over Jerrara Creek. Continue along a track north from the lookout, 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 (this drop also has bolts as of Jan 2022) and climb into the cleft on the right. Abseil 20m off slings around a chockstone (this drop also has bolts as of Jan 2022). There is a very small stance at the bottom, before a 40m swim.

200m of creek walking follows before the next series of 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 up on the left, or 35m from bolts and slings on the right. Both are a bit tricky to get to if the rock is wet. Another swim follows.

The next short drop is about 6m, and can be abseiled or hand-over-handed on the right or hand-over-handed on the left (this drop also has bolts as of Jan 2022).

The next drop is 8m, from bolts on the top of the big chockstone, or bolts and slings to the right for easier pulldown. 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.

50m of walking rings you out at the top of 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 about 10m vertical from left to right to a ledge, where the slope steepens. This section can be optionally abseiled from slings around casuarinas.

There are several options for abseiling the falls - the best is probably via 3 sets of bolts to the right of the falls, the first of which are found about 5m down. It is about 80-85m to the bottom of the falls from those bolts. The next bolts are about 27m down on the next ledge. This ledge has a small sloping stance, and you should have either a small party or additional ropes to re-rig. A further 35m down is another small ledge with bolts. It is another 30-35m from those bolts, depending on water level, past a larger ledge, to the edge of the pool. A 30m swim follows.

There are also various casuarinas on the way down that could be used as alternative anchors.

Walk downstream to the junction with Bungonia Creek.

A little way below this is another large drop. It is possible with some difficulty 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 40m to another ledge above or into a pool depending on whether the pool is full or empty. There is another large casuarina about 10m from the top for a rebelay. There are also bolts on the right hand side of the creek, for a 40m abseil through the falls. There are many boulders on the right side, which may make the pulldown tricky. Swim 30m across the pool. Note that if the pool level is low, the abseils may be longer (5-10m longer), and it may be difficult to get out.

One more big drop follows immediately, but it is easily scrambled on the left. Continue down to 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. Option 1 is recommended:

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. 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. There are a couple of options to exit. The time estimate assumes you are taking the first exit.

### Comments

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

The abseils down Jerrara Falls are big and exposed and an experienced leader is needed to decide which ledges to stop on.

## OTHER

### Macquarie Pass Canyon

**Difficulty:** M

**Abseils:** 5-15

**Distance:** 6km

**Quality:** NA

**Date last checked:** 2017-03-11

**Time:** 4-9 hours

**Longest abseil:** 40m

**Ascent:** 30m

**Wetsuits:** Recommended

**Maps:** Robertson

Macquarie Pass Canyon, or Macquarie Rivulet, is largely a scenic waterfall abseiling trip, though there are a couple of short slot-like sections. Being on the south coast, the water tends to be warmer than the canyons in the Blue Mountains.

There are private property access issues with the top access to Macquarie Pass near Mt Murray Rd. At this stage there is no access to the top of the falls.

Currently it is best to walk in from Clover Hill Rd, and start the canyon at the causeway at Rainbow Falls, or 350m upstream at Clover Falls. Entry directions are below.

### Entry

There are several access points off the Illawarra Highway (A48) as it passes through Macquarie Pass. Coming from the coast, turn right on to the A48 from the Princes Highway (A1) at Albion Park, and right again, after 2.7km, staying on the A48. After a further 9.5km, just after crossing a bridge over Macquarie Rivulet, the bottom car park can be found on the left. This is the usual place for leaving a car for a car shuffle. A further 2.3km up the hill on the left is the Clover Hill Rd car park. This the best access to the middle section of the canyon, but only has space for around 6-8 cars. Another 5.3km up the hill there is a parking area on the right hand side of the road at the junction with Mt Murray Rd.

Currently there is no access to Macquarie Rivulet from Mt Murray Road. In the meantime, use the Clover Hill Rd access.

From the parking area at Clover Hill Rd, follow the road around past the abandoned Clover Hill property, and then sharp right at the last clearing. A track and then old road takes you down to the Rivulet at the causeway at top of Rainbow Falls, about halfway through the canyon. From there it is also possible to cross the creek and follow a vague track upstream to the top of Clover Falls, missing only the first three falls which are right at the upper cliffline.

### Notes

The first three abseils are in the top cliffline and are currently not accessible due to private property issues. **Parties should start at Clover Falls or below.** The abseils above Clover Falls are still listed for completeness (it is possible but tedious to climb up to them from below).

First abseil is 10m into a pool - a pothole, wet, and tricky to get out of. Alternatively a tricky dry abseil along the left with potential for a large swing. Another alternative is to abseil from the cliffline above.

Next is a 19m drop from chains on left, down the waterfall, to a large platform.

On the left side of the platform are chains for a 34m abseil down the falls. Also slings to the right for a similar length drop.

Then follows a long boulder scramble. It may be easier to walk down ridges/slopes well to the left of the creek, as the next drop is not for around 400m (120m vertical).

The next abseil is the beautiful Clover Falls, which is around 26m from slings on the left, down the falls. Wade around the pool on the left.

A short way down there is a boulder section, with a series of drops and falls. These start with a short (2m) abseil or hand over hand, and a slippery walk down a sloping waterfall. Head to the right of the falls, for an 8m abseil, and then a 15m abseil down to the right of Mulangong Falls. A couple more scrambles bring you to the causeway. This whole section can be bypassed on the right above the creek via a faint track.

Immediately below the causeway is the first slot section of creek, and Rainbow Falls. There is a chain on the left (8m abseil) and then chains on the right in the creek (6m abseil). Some wading and/or a short swim in this section.

Then there is a 500m creek walk to the next set of abseils. There are some smaller falls and slides, which can be climbed around if desired.

The next set of abseils starts with a 10m abseil from chains on the right.

Then an 18m drop in two stages from chains on the left. It can be done as two drops by stopping at the top of the lower falls, and walking across to more chains. The latter requires a floating disconnect. A short swim gets you to the top of the next drop, which is a 3m jump (check depth) that can also be bypassed on the right.

Finally there is a long section of pleasant flat creek walking to the jump rock and slide, where tourists regularly visit.

### Exit

At the next creek junction on the left, a track leaves following just above the rivulet, heading back to the car park at the bottom. There is also a track that leads up the ridge to the Illawarra Highway about 100m from Clover Hill Rd.

### Comments

Macquarie Pass is an enjoyable day out. There is a reasonable amount of getting wet, though in the middle of summer, the water is not that cold since the canyon is near the coast.