



President's Report

With the release of our Winter Program, I hope you will find an activity suitable for you all and a big thank you to all those leaders who volunteered their time to help us put it together.

Here is some information on what we have planned for the club in the near future and what we hope to achieve for YHA Bushwalking to run smoothly.

You may know by now that there is a new bushwalking committee on hand for 2010/11. I would like to welcome Romaine Fawcett and Anne Donaldson; it's great to see that we have a strong female presence on the committee, joining Tamie, Cynthia and the boys. I would also like to thank David Sisson, our past President and committee member, for his tireless work and organisation of trips over the years for the club.

We are always looking for new leaders for our upcoming programs; if you are interested and would like to run (→ [page 2](#))



(l-r) Ivy, Yen, Joe, Derek, Suwei and Laura on the return walk after spending the Queens Birthday weekend at the Wilsons Prom lighthouse.

Although the lighthouse cottages provide very comfortable accommodation in a glorious setting, the walk to get there is moderately challenging.

For several on this trip such as Ivy, it was one of their first pack-carries. Ivy's impressions of the walk, and tips for those thinking of making the move from day walker to happy camper are on [page 7](#).

Photo Competition - back for 2010

The club photo competition is on again. As with last year there are three main categories – Landscape, People and Wildlife – plus a special category for this year only. Conditions are similar to last year: Photos must have been taken on a YHA bushwalk on or after 9th November 2009 and be received by 8th November 2010. Full details [p15](#).



Why is this group of walkers gathered around a nondescript puddle with a metal pole rising from it? Could this be the beginning of something significant – find out on [page 9](#)

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YHA BUSHWALKING COMMITTEE 2010/11

President	Andrew Stevenson
Secretary	Romaine Fawcett
Treasurer	Tamie Dick
Walks Secretary	Ken Sussex
Social Secretary	Cynthia Bell
Search & Rescue Rep	Paul Gottliebson
General committee	Anne Donaldson Hooi-Soon Khoo Bruce Meincke John Sloan

Clubnight Coordinator (non-committee) Louise Reynolds
Yeti Editor (non-committee) Stephen Smith

CONTRIBUTIONS TO YETI

These articles don't write themselves y'know, nor are they all plagiarised from the internet (well some of them aren't anyway). If you've enjoyed yourself on one or two YHA trips or have some thoughts about bushwalking which you'd like to share, then here's your opportunity to do so. Find a spare moment, jot them down then email them to yhabush@bigpond.com.

YETI ONLINE

"Yeti" has its own website www.yhabush.org.au/Yeti containing an online version of the latest issue as well as archived articles from past editions. The web versions are well worth visiting, as they often include additional photographs not able to be included in the print version for reasons of space, as well as superior reproduction.

TRIP LEADERS

Take advantage of the opportunity to promote your upcoming trips in YETI with a more detailed description than space in the programme allows. Please contact the editor with the details.

YHA ACTIVITIES CLUBNIGHT

Is held on a Monday night once a month at the 'Hub', 80 Harbour Esplanade, Docklands from 8pm to approx. 9:30pm. Special events start at 8.15pm sharp, everybody welcome.

YETI THANKS

The following contributors to this issue:

Romaine Fawcett
Jason Foote
Ivy Lee
Bruce Meincke
Sonya Radywyl
David Sale
Andrew Stevenson
Ken Sussex

For Sale

MSR 1-person Hubba tent
Lightweight (1.33 kg), near new.

(Suit small-medium sized person. Current owner is slightly too large for it and rather than undergo corrective surgery, wishes to trade-up to a more capacious model!)



\$380 ono – Jason 0410 125 445

President's Report (cont'd from p1)

a walk for the club, then we are always eager to hear from you. We will be organising the Spring Program shortly and will be again contacting leaders for their support.

You may have heard through the grapevine that the club is in the process of revamping its sign-in sheets and booking forms. This is to help us with information required for overnight and remote trips away and also to help keep an up to date record of our finances. My apologies that these forms have not been forthcoming earlier - there are possibly one or two drafts in use at the moment, but when they do arrive they will be a standard form that will enable us to run our walks and events more smoothly.

We will also be looking at other areas that can help make the club better for all and will be putting in place an emergency contact system for all our overnight and extended trips. This will put us in line with what all other clubs are doing.

It's been a little while since the club has put on a first aid course. Will be looking at running one of these again towards the end of the year and encourage our current and would-be leaders to participate. The club will subsidise those who have lead or are willing to lead a walk for the club.

There will be a Walks Sub-Committee shortly to help organise and coordinate the clubs walks and events for the near future and beyond. If you have any suggestions for the club or think that there is an area we have not been to for a while please let Ken Sussex, our Walks Secretary, know.

Our Clubnights at the Hub in Docklands are gaining in popularity; this is great to see and a great way to come along and find out about the club if you have not walked with us before.

If you unfortunately missed the well-attended talk about BSAR's (Bush Search and Rescue) role in search and rescue situations and how not to get lost in the bush (and first-hand experience on the Tim Holding search), then coming up: Jason Foote will be showing some photography from his trekking trip to Ladakh in Northern India and Birds Australia will be talking about their important work with the DSE for Regent Honey Eater Project (see details page 3).

The Photo competition is on again with some great prizes, so get your cameras out and start snapping. This time there will be a special category for the best fungal photo to go along with the usual Landscape, Wildlife and People categories.

Looking forward to seeing you all on a walk in the near future.

Regards

Andrew Stevenson

President
YHA Bushwalking



Clubnight Events

Trekking in Ladakh (Monday August 2nd)

The Ladakh plateau is in India's northernmost section, part of Kashmir. As Ladakh borders Tibet to the east, it has similar scenery and culture (India's only predominantly Buddhist region). In 2009 Jason Foote spent a month exploring this region, trekking the mountainous Himalayan region from Manali to Leh with a local (and somewhat drunken) horseman as his guide. Hear Jason's experiences, including tales of a few run-ins with the authorities and tips for travellers in this remote but beautiful area.

Also of interest to anyone interested in trekking Nepal, Himalayan Holidays (guest presenters at last October's Clubnight) are offering YHA Bushwalkers \$100 off their November tour – see advertisement page 15.

John & Monica Chapman (Monday Nov 15th)

The authors of numerous highly-regarded bushwalking guidebooks covering all regions of Australia from SW Tasmania to the Larapinta Trail, John & Monica Chapman will be our guest speakers at the November clubnight.

As well as talking about their experiences and showing a selection of photographs, copies of the latest editions of their books will be available for sale (and autograph!) at a discount to the normal rrp.

Warby Ranges base-camp (Aug 21-22nd)

Extending north from Glenrowan in Victoria's north east is a steep scarp range known locally as the Warbys. It is a magnificent weekend hideaway: open forest country dotted with clumps of 'old man' grass trees, a carpet of wild flowers and heaps of delightful gullies to explore. From its ramparts there are spectacular views of the endless plains to the north and Victoria's rugged snow capped peaks to the south.

Two walks are planned from our base camp. The first, explores the plateau's eastern escarpment, Jubilee Falls, the picturesque Native Pine Gully. The second explores three very pretty gullies in the north of the range, with spectacular views from Mt Kilawarra... and wild flowers galore.

Neither of these walks include any serious climbs or descents ... or walking on tracks to any significant degree.

Grading: *Medium* **Enquiries:** [Ken Sussex](mailto:Ken.Sussex@optusnet.com.au) 9495-1350

Regent Honeyeater Project

- Clubnight Monday September 6th
- Tree-planting Weekend September 18-19th



Another tree planting weekend has been put on the program following the success of last year's event in the fabulous Regent Honeyeater Project in North East Victoria. You may not have heard of the project before, but last year it was ranked

in the top 25 ecological restoration projects in Australia. Since the work first started in 1997, 20,082 volunteers have fenced and prepared 414 sites, planted 420,725 seedlings, restoring a total of 1163 hectares of habitat.

The large forest blocks in the region, the old growth trees along many roadsides, and the wooded creek lines which have been the core habitat for our native flora and fauna for decades are now being linked by the project to establish continuous habitat from the Warby Ranges in the north through to the Alpine National Park. It has already been successful. In the latest survey, the project area was found to have more bird species than any other farming district in the state!!

Apart from being a thoroughly worthwhile project, the weekend last year was a lot of fun too. The accommodation in the Scout Hall was fairly basic, but the organisers turned on a really good spread for morning and afternoon teas, a fabulous meal at the Benalla TAFE restaurant on Saturday night, and a massive BBQ for lunch on Sunday. Ray Thomas, the project's director, also provided some fascinating insights into the work of the project.

For more information, come to Clubnight on September 6, or visit the project website www.regenthoneyeater.org.au Enquiries to Ken Sussex on 9495-1350 or by email to kesussex@optusnet.com.au

Here's your chance to grab a bargain

YHA Bushwalking is organising a

Gear Buying Day

When: Saturday October 2nd 10am – 4pm

Venue: The Hub (clubnight location)
80 Harbour Esplanade Docklands.

Sellers: Cost is \$10 for a table to sell any outdoor gear (tents, sleeping bags, stoves, clothing) that is in good condition. The table can be registered by sending your details to yhabushinfo@yahoo.com.au

Buyers: Entry is free, a web page will be set up with listings of any equipment registered beforehand.

Light refreshments will be provided by the club

Melbourne Cup Weekend Walks (Oct 30th - Nov 2nd)

Sadly there's only one more public holiday between now and Christmas, but if you can arrange to have the four days off work, the walks planned for this year's Cup Weekend should suit most tastes and abilities.

Wilsons Promontory (accommodated)



Wilsons Promontory is one of the places that people return to year after year. One reason is its proximity to Melbourne. The other is the variety of walks, terrain, and scenery that the Prom offers, in particular its cool rainforests and beaches. There have been several pack-carries to the Prom but it has been quite a while since the last accommodated trip. The downside to this popularity is the need to book accommodation well in advance for any holiday period.

Fortunately, several ensuite cabins have been booked for the Cup Weekend. The plan is to stay in cabins at the Yanakie Caravan Park for the four nights, arriving Friday 29th October. Cost is \$145 for the four nights + trip fees (\$10 or \$12). Note that this caravan park is approximately four kilometres outside the Prom park entrance.

The first walk will be a loop following the Telegraph Track to Oberon and Little Oberon Bays, Norman Point and arriving in Tidal River. This track initially follows a 4wd track through woodlands and coastal scrub before returning along the coast, with some magnificent views across several bays. The distance is 17km but is a relatively easy track.

The second walk is a return track to Sealers Cove, approximately 16km. This is also a relatively easy walk, passing through woodlands and a few cool rain-forest gullies before arriving at the pristine beach at Sealers Cove.

The third walk will encompass sections of the western coastline near Tidal River. It will begin near Lilly Pilly Gully and include Pillar Point, Squeaky Beach, Picnic Bay, Picnic Point, Whiskey Bay and Tongue to Derby River (with a short section following the road); approx. 15km.

There are a few options for the last day. One is a shorter walk to Millers Landing and Vereker Lookout. At low tide it is possible to walk out to an island. Another option is a beach walk in Yanakie. This comprises of granite boulders and outcrops and will involve some rock scrambling.

Grading: *Medium* **Enquiries:** *David Sale 0407 667 624*

Howitt Plains & Bryces Gorge (base-camp)



It can be difficult to explain to someone only slightly familiar with Victoria's alpine region where the Howitt and Snowy Plains part is. There isn't a major ski resort nearby and the closest settlement, 60km away, is Licola. Licola?? - fair enough, its population is barely into double figures, and the only reason anyone visits it is as the gateway to...the Snowy and Howitt Plains. The next closest town, the more moderately sized Heyfield, is another 50km away, and it's almost a further 50km to Traralgon, the last major highway point en-route to Howitt Plains.

This elevated region of rolling hills and open snow-grass plains is thus quite remote, even though its distance from Melbourne (350km) is less than Falls Creek or Mt Hotham. It features some of Victoria's most spectacular scenery, yet because there aren't any businesses or services within cooee to make money from visitors, pictures of it rarely appear in glossy tourist brochures.

Distinctive peaks such as Mt Howitt and the Cross-Cut Saw are visible on a clear day from Mt Buller or Mt Stirling; for many this is the closest they will get to some of the most exciting parts of the Alpine National Park. The attractions of this area are well known to those fond of hard overnight bushwalks, but many of them are also accessible as relatively easy day walks.

For those who enjoy bush camping but aren't up to carrying a heavy pack, this trip is an ideal chance to see the highlights of this region. Base-camp will be at the Bryces Gorge car park, a pleasant grassed area amidst snow gums, with picnic tables and a toilet. A short distance away a creek meanders across a plain, giving no clue that less than two kilometres further on it will plunge a few hundred metres down the rugged cliffs of Bryces Gorge. A walk around these clifftops is the first of the day walks. Others will take in Mt Reynard/Kelly's Hut and MacAlister Springs/Mt Howitt/Cross-Cut Saw before finishing with a half-day Cup day walk to Mt Tamboritha and Shaws Falls.

The walks are within an altitude range of 1300-1600m; the only hard climbing will done by the vehicles.

Grading: *Medium* **Enquiries:** *Stephen Smith 9387 6481*

Tips for Better Bushwalking

#40 - Starting out on Snow-Shoes

Snow-shoes have undergone a resurgence in popularity over the past few years, and provide the best means of “bushwalking” in the snow. Compared with skis they are easy to use, and much much easier when carrying a heavy pack. They may not offer the adrenaline rush or speed of skiing open slopes, but are more manoeverable off-track, particularly amongst trees and can be worn with normal walking boots.

The principle of a snow-shoe is simple – by distributing weight over a larger area than offered by the sole of your boots, the pressure applied to the snow is less than that required to sink up to your ankles (or knees!), as can happen after a fresh fall or even a slushy base during the spring thaw. In icy conditions slipping can be more of a problem than sinking, so most current designs also include a means of gripping the snow.

Modern snow-shoes have evolved from those used by native American Indians and developed by European settlers to the “tennis racquet” (or ‘bear paw’) style of webbed wooden frames.



These types of snowshoes were difficult for walking up or down steep slopes and the wide stance needed to accommodate them could become very tiring after just a few kilometres. Over the past 20-30 years snow-shoe design has been revolutionised by the use of lightweight materials (aluminium, plastic), the incorporation of crampons or other mechanisms for grip and easier to use bindings. Width has decreased, allowing a more natural walking posture.

There isn't any advanced technique needed for snow-shoeing, a few basic tips will aid in quickly getting used to them:

- * First and foremost, just walk normally, keeping the shoes parallel.
- * Use trekking or X-C poles in conjunction with them.
- * Stepping backwards is difficult (tails tend to dig into the snow), step around in a circle or use a kick turn.
- * Kick in when going uphill
- * Keep your weight over your heels when descending.

Most models of snowshoes come in just three sizes; the size you need is dependent solely on weight, not your height or foot length. Weight also includes your pack, so planned usage (day walks or overnight camping) may affect what size you need.

Here's a summary of three of the most commonly available snow shoes from Australian retail outlets. Listed weights are for the 'standard' size, rated for a load of up to 100kg.

Yowie

Cost: \$250-\$300

Weight: 1.18kg/pair.

A moulded plastic base, no moving parts and a simple design makes Yowies ideal for flat snow country and walking around in the snow without a heavy pack. The patterned base achieves grip on snow in a similar manner to patterned X-C ski bases, while aluminium cleats provide grip in icy conditions.

Disadvantages: Not good walking up and down or traversing steep slopes. The binding is difficult to use when it gets wet and freezes.



MSR Denali Classic

Cost: \$300-\$400

Weight: 1.74kg/pair

Plastic base, with steel traction blades along the edges and crampons under the foot.

For deep snow conditions, or when carrying a heavy pack, the surface area of this model snowshoe can be extended using flotation tails (~\$70/set, available in 10, 15 & 20cm lengths). Good traction, easy-to-use (freeze-proof) binding

Disadvantages: Only a two-strap binding. The steel traction bars are sharp and can damage the plastic top of the shoe.



MSR Lightning Ascent

Cost: \$500-\$600

Weight: 1.59kg/pair

Aluminium frame, with a “televator” (heel-lift bracket) making ascents easier and more comfortable. The best-performance snow-shoe, excellent traction in steep and rugged terrain.

Its main disadvantage is the relatively high price.

The increased popularity of snowshoes means that they can be hired at many ski shops (typically \$20/day, \$30/weekend) although it is advisable to check first. Some offer Yowies, others “classic” (usually MSR Denalis), whilst a few offer a choice. This provides a handy try-before-you buy opportunity.

This winter's programme has a few trips suitable for those getting started with snow-shoes. Baw Baw plateau (Aug 7th) is ideal for beginners, as it should be on snow all of the way without any major climbs. Mt Buller via Klingsporn track (July 31st) is on a fairly sheltered route and steady gradient. Note that the climb (and descent) is over 1000m (hence the M-H rating); if you aren't fit enough to walk this type of route, snow-shoes won't make it easier, but they won't seem more difficult either. Mt Stirling (Aug 1st) is also recommended, however Mt Buller via Northwest Ridge, Mt Feathertop and Mt Bogong are more advanced, also requiring an ice-axe.



Know Your Committee - Romaine Fawcett

One of two new faces on the 2010/11 bushwalking committee, Romaine Fawcett has taken over the role of Secretary from Hooi-Soon Khoo. Part of the job is being the official contact point for group emails about walk updates and other items not included on the main walks programme. Romaine wouldn't dream of sending emails about herself, so here's an introduction for those of you who haven't yet met her on a walk..

How long have you been walking with YHA? My first walk with the club was in 2004 to Mt Donna Buang. It took me another year to do a second walk, which was Mt Macedon and although I had massive blisters from new boots, the experience was great and I have been walking with the club ever since.

What attracted you to us in the first place? My sister introduced me to the walking group. I hate gyms and wanted an outlet that would help keep me fit as I have a massive bucket list of things I still want to do and see. The social aspect of the club was appealing – doing an activity I enjoy with like-minded people. Someone is always just coming back from an amazing trip or planning one and I love to hear all the travel adventures.

Favourite walks so far? So many wonderful trips it is hard to pinpoint my favourite. I loved the Dargo River for its remoteness and river walking.

I loved the Crinoline for the amazing views from our campsite. I loved swimming in Refuge Cove at Wilsons Prom.



I loved the Overland track for the challenges and rewards of climbing the peaks – Cradle Mountain, West Pelion, Ossa and The Acropolis.

Many more to come...

Were there any moments when you wondered why on earth you took up bushwalking? Only once when I didn't think I could make it to the end of the first day on a pack carry. But with the help of a very patient leader I got there in the end. That trip was Mt Feathertop via the Bon Accord spur.

Strangest sight on a walk? That's easy. Coming over a ridge we heard a horn blowing. There beyond the ridge was a fully operational steam engine on its own track bordering state forest less than 2 hours from Melbourne. What can I say - boys toys!!

Funniest moment? When I was trying very carefully to enter a stream to have a quick wash, as it was freezing (Overland Tassie trip), and I fell flat on my bottom and went totally underwater. I had a total look of shock on my face whilst my two fellow walkers were desperately trying to maintain composure. They only started laughing at me when I laughed at myself.



Are there any luxury items you usually like to take on a pack-carry? Wine, chocolate and perfume. Obviously I am high maintenance.

Favourite meal camping in the bush... Would have to be spaghetti bolognese accompanied by a glass of red chateau box. A small amount allowed for the sauce. Also pre dinner nibbles are a highlight.

What places haven't you been to yet that you'd most like to visit? High on the list would be Vietnam (Sapa region) and Nepal (Annapurna trek). The attractions being the amazing walks and the immersion in the culture of these countries.

Favourite movie? What can I say I am an incurable romantic so it would be a toss up between 'An Officer and a Gentleman' or 'The Deer Hunter' or perhaps 'Out of Africa'.

Do you have any suggested improvements for the club? I think that we need to continue to encourage and support walkers who want to take the next step and be walk leaders in the club, thus ensuring we can continue to offer wonderful walking experiences to our members.

I would like to see continued projects giving back to the environment we so enjoy.

And finally, any advice for new walkers? Give it a go! If I can do it any one can. I've progressed from Sunday walker to base-camping to pack carrying and am loving it. You just need to be prepared to go out of your comfort zone. The rewards are great!!

Wilsons Prom Lighthouse - tips for graduating to a pack-carry

At first while gathered at the Telegraph Saddle car park and then over a well-earned coffee at the (highly recommended) Orange Roughy café in Fish Creek, P-plate pack-carrier Ivy Lee was persuaded to write about her impressions of the Wilsons Prom Lighthouse trip over the Queens Birthday weekend.

I began bushwalking with YHA a year ago, graduating to my first base camp at Mt Cole, also led by Andrew Stevenson and during winter no less. So I thought I would share my tips for graduating from day walker to happy camper.

Be prepared

Being prepared actually starts beforehand and is not the same as planning for a trip. It's like being prepared for married life as compared to planning for the wedding day.

Don't expect to get fit from the occasional Sunday walk; unless you are young and boundless with energy like our two youngest walkers – Laura and Suwei. Most of our group takes part in a regular activity or some sports. When you are reasonably fit, walking the undulating trails and conquering the endless hills – be they tiny or big ones – becomes less of a chore and you might even forget the weight on your back! This is especially so for a trip rated medium plus.

As for packing for a trip, it does not have to be as fretful as dressing up for a first date; some things are common sense and a good checklist will reduce the anxiety of forgetting something important.

Pack lightweight. Strip off food packaging or repack. Use zipper bags instead of plastic storage containers. Reuse bags and recycle packaging to hold the next day's lunch or food scraps and garbage that you have to take out. Detailing each amount of meals and snacks will mean little or no excess food to carry out. As for clothing, fresh underwear and spare socks are a must. Everything else is discretionary.



Derek (left) sheepishly labelled himself the 'garbage man' because at the end of the hike, he had enough empty cans, paper and plastic packaging and three large storage containers to fill his 35 litre day pack alone.

He was the unique walker among us carrying front and back packs.

Know yourself; be yourself

Ask for advice, observe other people's experiences and try things out yourself. For example, most would recommend bursting water blisters, then taping them up but I was squeamish about this. So when I had blisters – one each on my little toes – which happened as they did at previous walks, rather than pierce them, I just taped them. And this



worked fine for me. I also found that while I am walking, I generate enough body heat to need no more than one middleweight baselayer, even in winter.

At Mt Cole, I told Andrew that I tolerated the cold poorly so he lent me a sleeping bag rated -20 °C. I tried a few others and eventually bought a goose down bag rated -10°C that has seen me through winter and even summer camping. Like finding your prince, you have to kiss some frogs first.

I was also meticulous about the weight I carried as I knew my limitations. So whilst I wouldn't spend as much on normal clothing, I invested a small fortune in lightweight gear. At the Lighthouse, we had luxurious accommodation with complete bathroom and kitchen facilities so all we had to carry were our personal items, food and sleeping bags. For my body weight, 16kg was the maximum for a recommended 25 – 30% pack to weight ratio. For this trip, I carried 13kg. Even so, for our social night where each of us had to bring something to share, I was willing to carry in a good drop of red but reluctant to carry out an empty bottle. The compromise was finding a fellow walker like Derek willing to trade that for a more generous share.

Also, remember why you are doing a pack carry in the first place. Do you love the bush and the scenic views? Are you there to delight in the open space and maybe good conversation? Whatever your reasons, it's easy to fall into the pace set by a competitive sportsman or one who is lots fitter and find yourself playing catch-up and missing the joy of walking. Several times, I allowed others to pass and deliberately dropped back so that I could revel in the solitude or drink in the sights and sounds of nature. Since this is mushroom season, I made sure I captured pictures of the six or more varieties of fungi that sprouted along the trails. And sometimes, we just need a private moment for our digestive system to commune with nature.

Eat, drink and be merry

Pack carry meals do not have to mean hardship. Or, an excuse to diet, start your new health plan or whatever reason

Wilsons Prom Lighthouse (cont'd)

for eating muesli bars and crackers for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Sure, camp meals require some planning and effort but with practice and creativity, some ideas are easily adaptable and they don't weigh a ton. Yen made pizzas for us with pitta bread, tomato paste, olives, kabana, ham and capsicums. I had a tasty mash from a packet with roasted chicken (vacuum packed from Coles), cheese and spinach. Stephen's colourful veggie stir fry with chilli and fish sauce sent our nostrils into sensory overload. Foods suitable for camping can all come from your regular supermarket.

Finally, if you can, go with a leader who includes a social as part of his/her program. Be it entertainment (like the summer solstice moonlight beach party with another group) and/or a potluck dinner, you will have a fantastic time.



On our second day, we completed a moderate/hard 19km return trek to Little Waterloo Bay. We arrived back in time for a conducted tour by the resident lighthouse keeper and when it ended, we were chilled from the ocean winds and famished. So began our afternoon tea and snacks that soon progressed to the potluck as lollies, chocolates, nuts of all sorts, cheese, dips and crackers started appearing on the table. And uplifting in more ways than one would be any kind of spirit, so when the wines emerged so did our enthusiasm.

With no further prompting, dinners were cooked and tucked into with gusto as more food for sharing kept piling up. The feasting that began at 4.30pm stretched over four hours as we adjourned from the kitchen to the cosy lounge room for more cheesecake and tea.

As a foodie, perhaps the highlight of a pack carry walk would be to eat, drink and be merry. The pack-carries to different circuits of the Prom led first by Les and then Andrew may have been the best initiation into camping for me.

Find your moment

Every trip will have its moments. No matter how many walks we go on, there will always be a view that is more breathtaking or a moment so exhilarating that you feel exonerated for punishing your body with the aches and pain that invariably accompany a pack carry.

And like runners, cyclists and walkers, there will always be that memorable 'big' hill(s) to conquer.



Trip details

What: Wilson's Prom Lighthouse, 11 – 14 June 2010

From: Telegraph Saddle Carpark to Lighthouse via Telegraph Track, 19.1km

Return: Lighthouse to Telegraph Saddle Carpark via walking track, 18.3km

Day 2: Lighthouse to Little Waterloo Bay (return), 18.6km?

Total hike: 56km

For this trip, the legendary steep climb to the lighthouse became apparent towards the last two kilometres when views unveiled the tower in the distance. Like a shiny pearl in the ocean, its pristine stone walls glistened in the sun's rays, at once beckoning and distant. Then as we drew nearer, the long, paved path leading up to the lighthouse began to fill our minds with fear and dread. But press on we did; each of the 480 slow, tortuous steps that I counted to get to the top. We made this climb not once but twice – equivalent to going up the famed 1000 Steps in the Dandenong Ranges.

Just do it

Just as I took the plunge to drive on this trip whilst on P plates, there is no better way to get better and more confident than to do it. Check out the walks program and begin with an introduction pack carry. Who knows where the journey will take you? For me, I am already dreaming of the Larapinta Trail.

Ivy Lee

FOR SALE

- ❖ **Snowshoes;** MSR Denali Evo (plastic), 3 toe strap binding, VGC. \$250
- ❖ **Sleeping bag;** Macpac Solstice, 4 season rating, Epic shell, mummy shape, very little use, \$400
- ❖ **Tent;** MSR Hubba Hubba, 3 season, 2 person dome, 2 vestibules, VGC \$350 or NEW \$480.
- ❖ **Ice axe,** Black Diamond, 75 cm long, VGC, \$125.

Contact: Bruce 9306 2428

Ropers Hut Formal Dinner

Dubious looking blondes, a venomous gatecrasher and a half-season tent; another typical formal dinner weekend!



After an absence of a couple of years from our programme, the formal dinner walk made a comeback last summer at the rebuilt Ropers Hut. The nine kilometre walk in was far enough for a feeling of getting away from it all, but easy enough to compensate for the extra weight of food and drink being carried. It took a few years to rebuild the hut after its destruction in the 2003 bushfires, but the result is well worth the effort; an attractive building in keeping with its original character, but with a cleaner and better designed interior. Even without the hut this is one of the most attractive camping areas on the Bogong High Plains, set amidst an intact stand of snow gums that was able to be saved from the fire. At 1600m it is above the winter snowline but not the summer snakeline, as evidenced by a metre long tiger slithering between the tents while everyone was sitting around having lunch.

For anyone hoping for tips by observing what food or clothing others take on an overnight walk, the displays of fine food, wine and fashion on this trip were (sadly) very atypical.



The same applies to those seeking ideas on what to sleep in. You won't find this gracing the display floor of Anaconda. Resident equipment connoisseur Bruce Meincke was flabbergasted to find a brand of tent he'd never owned before! It's hoped that formal dinners will resume as an annual event; anyone with ideas or willing to organise next summer's is encouraged to contact the Walks Secretary.

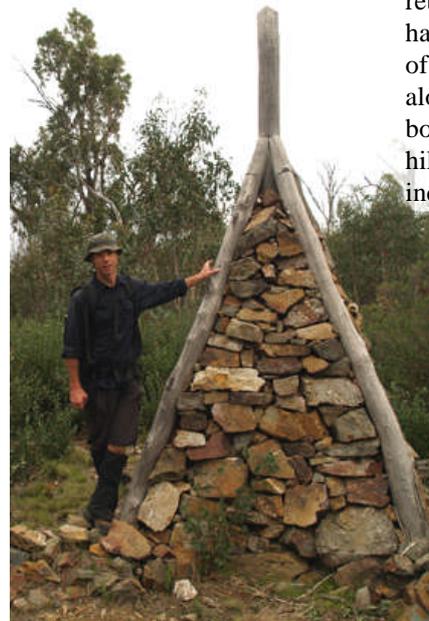
Seeking the Source of the Murray

The mighty Murray river has its humble beginnings in the remote high country of Victoria and NSW, a day's walk from the closest access road open to the public. It is barely a trickle as it enters Cowombat Flat, a large open alpine plain between the Cobberas on the Victorian side and Mt Pilot to the north in NSW. Pilot Creek, also crossing Cowombat Flat, has a much stronger flow but it is classed as a tributary, the first of many creeks and rivers to have their identity subsumed by the Murray on its long journey to South Australia.

On Easter Saturday, Cowombat Flat was a welcome relief after several hours of what was far from a showcase for the attractions of bushwalking. A peak early in the day didn't have much of a view as the clouds hadn't lifted. Mt Pilot was revealed later on, but at the pace we'd been managing there wouldn't be time for a side trip to its summit. As a consolation prize, the source of the Murray was within reach, two kilometres as the crow flies or four as the Murray meanders.

And so a late afternoon expedition set off to locate its source, the point at which the Victorian-NSW border reverts to a straight line southeast to Cape Howe. There was some uncertainty as to what we'd find; a cairn was supposed to mark the spot, but the map had it located on top of a hill. After about an hour following the miniscule Murray upstream, it began to fizzle out entirely.

With the Murray now just a swampy patch of ground, we spread out in search for a cairn but instead came upon a 1m steel pole. There weren't any markings on it, but in the middle of this wilderness, there could only be one reason for its existence. While we congratulated ourselves and admired this little pole, Bruce and Rudi disappeared on a compass bearing up an adjacent hill. Eventually they returned triumphant, having found the first of many survey cairns along the straight-line border on top of the hill as the map indicated.



Rudi at the Forest Hill border cairn (photo: Bruce Meincke)

If we'd needed passports for this excursion, they would have been overflowing with stamps from the innumerable border crossings that afternoon. Mission accomplished, we made one final crossing to where the grass looked greener, heading back to camp on the NSW side of Cowombat Flat.

Wet Anzac Weekends

We all want decent rain to fall across Victoria - but not on long weekends. When this did occur on the Anzac holiday weekend, here's how two trip leaders had to incorporate it in their stride.

Mt Buffalo base-camp



Sometimes you have plans, good plans, fun plans even and then it rains solidly for 18 hours.

We awoke at Lake Catani Campground on Saturday to the steady patter (more like buckets being thrown in our general direction) of raindrops. It was also cold - this was the last weekend the campground was open until after winter. Half the morning was spent huddled in the shelter, thinking about hot drinks and warmer, dryer things. Periodic chats with the ranger didn't make us any more optimistic about the weather improving. "They're forecasting snow above 1800m" he advised us with a grin. With a few first timers in our group, this led to some reassessment of the planned program.

About half of us decided to go for a short walk - after all, that was why we were here, and the legs needed some stretching. We splashed our way from the campground, passing by the Underground River track. We decided to leave investigating it for another trip, in case the river had chosen this moment to make a break for the surface. At the Chalet (wet, also windy!), we explored a little bit and in doing the gorge heritage walk, learnt about Alice Manfield - a naturalist, photographer and mountain guide from the early part of the 20th century. We were quite taken by the description of her custom-made guiding suit and wondered if it kept the rain out.

Poor visibility meant that there wasn't much to see at the lookouts but it was pleasant all the same. We walked back to the campsite through ever increasing puddles, looking forward to a hot shower and a change of clothes. Leaving our sodden gear to fend for itself in front of the shelter fire, we headed down to Bright for dinner - and discovered everything was booked out (some kind of autumn festival was in progress) and the only table we could get was located outside. The high point was seeing the waterfalls on the drive down to Bright; all that water has to go somewhere. Bridal Veil falls was falling all the way across the road.

Sunday morning woke us with some sunshine struggling through the clouds, but that didn't last too long and it soon clouded over. The weather reports still looked a bit dicey, so we decided to do a few shorter walks. Our first stop was the Old Galleries track - this was a really delightful little taster that wound through some interesting rock formations. Next we visited the Horn - if you are going to drive all the way

here you need to stand on the highest bit. The fog had mostly cleared and at 1723m we had some lovely views over, the distant alpine ranges and across the rocky Buffalo plateau. After a lunch stop we walked along the Back Wall track to Dickson's Falls. This was classic sub alpine scenery - lots of long grasses, boulders, and clear cold streams.



Plateau near Dingo Dell

Monday greeted us with (finally!) sunshine & blue skies. We completed a loop starting from the Reservoir picnic area visiting the "Devil's Couch", the Giant's Causeway and Mt Dunn. In contrast to our walks the previous day, the slightly lower elevation meant the scenery was more snowgum forests and pretty meadows. Everywhere was evidence of the landscape regenerating after the 2003 & 2006 bushfires. Mt Dunn was a real surprise - a short steep switchbacked climb and then to get to the very top required ascending a series of steps and ladders. While we were resting there we heard dingos howling at each other in the distance. It was quite eerie.

As this trip only got half done due to that dastardly rain I'm planning on running it again - watch out for it early on next year's program.

Sonya Radywyl

Eildon / Cathedral Ranges

The sound of rain on a tin roof has a relaxing effect on most people; this was the sound heard for most of Friday night at the start of the Eildon accommodated trip. Continuous and heavy rain (20mm overnight) threatened to persist into Saturday. Fortunately the intensity reduced and degenerated into showers around breakfast. So everyone was still keen to attempt the Blowhard circuit walk...at least initially.

On the way via Eildon another heavy shower was sufficient to dissuade one car load from attempting the walk. This was unfortunate as the weather was mostly fine for the rest of the day, and the Blowhard circuit is aesthetically pleasing with plenty of views over the hills and the lake itself. There were also sightings of numerous kangaroos. (→ page 11)

Wet Anzac Weekends (cont'd)

The other group did end up doing a short walk around midday, but this was interrupted by a torrential downpour, flash flooding, potential landslides and rising water levels (their description). This was peculiar as the rest of the group was only around 5km away and merely experienced a light shower. Weather is a strange thing, although I do suspect a slight embellishment.

The walk for the Sunday was the Cathedral Ranges Northern circuit (Ned's Gully, Jawbone Peak, Cathedral Peak). The weather was almost perfect (fortunate as I found out later that there has been a history of falls and injuries in this area). The first section was flat and people took it easy (taking over an hour to travel 3.5km), with some being besotted by the various fungi and mushrooms erupting from the ground amid the decaying vegetation.

The real part of the walk began with a moderate then steep ascent to Jawbone Peak. This seemed to energise people, with most increasing their pace. Perhaps it was the incentive of lunch at Jawbone Peak. There were sweeping views around the Cathedral valley from this peak.



Rock hopping along the Cathedral Ranges ridgeline

The next section followed the ridge line to Cathedral Peak. There were continual views along this section, improved after the recent fires cleared much of the scrub. The problem was that one must continually watch one's footing with the rugged terrain and steep drops off one or both sides of the track. It was a great walk for those who like a bit of rock scrambling.

As the Cathedral Peak circuit was a hard walk, most people were only interested in a shorter, easier walk on the Monday. This was in the Rubicon valley area along a forestry track. It started from a historic hydro-power station (still in use) and followed the river via a waterfall to a dam. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to get particularly close to either due to restricted access but it was a pleasant walk in the forest nonetheless.

David Sale

Tour de Tallangatta

A winter trip is similar to standing at the base of a large hill that is to be climbed. It can be quite hard to get motivated but the rewards are worth it.

This Queens Birthday weekend trip was at Tallangatta, east of Wodonga. The reasons for selecting this location were that it hadn't been attempted for a few years, interesting walks and statistically more sunny days than Melbourne during winter. This last point paid off with sunny weather (balancing the cold nights of below zero degrees).

The first walk was supposed to be Flaggy Creek Gorge. The northern approach appeared to be too short so I opted for the longer southern approach. This was going to be too long (estimated at more than 22km), so it was changed to a circuit walk in the forest. This was OK but not as enticing as the gorge. My excuse (leader's prerogative) is that the map scaling or track routing was inaccurate (even the circuit walk was over 17km). Next time...

The second day was the assault on Pine Mountain. This was only 12km, but was expected to take 6-8 hours! Completion was a stretch target (management speak) and realistically unlikely. However, it wasn't necessary as there were numerous views along the way. The group opted to stop at a lookout with views of the snow covered mountains in the direction of Mt. Kosciusko - just after I made an exploratory trek down into the next valley!

As the return trek was much faster, this presented the opportunity for those who wanted more to complete a short(ish) walk to the Valley View lookout in the Mt. Lawson State Park. Surprisingly, there were a few die-hard walkers who were interested. There were also three girls who were not and raced back into the car ready for immediate departure with their eyes fixed straight ahead, while trying to ignore me and not look guilty.

Valley View lookout proved to be a moderate climb (my terminology) to a lookout encompassing the Murray River and valley area.



The last day was a short(ish) and easy(ish) walk beginning at Woolshed falls (pictured), with most of the group then walking to Beechworth. The first 3km was flat followed by a steep climb, however some great views over the cascades and valley make it worthwhile.

David Sale

Wows and Wherefores of New Zealand Walking

Some of the best and relatively easy to organise walks in the world are on Australia's doorstep



Starting Out. There's no mistaking this type of view for anything on an Australian walk, but less than four hours flying, an hour by bus and a mere five minutes of walking was all that was needed to get to it. This is the opening vista of the Rees-Dart track in New Zealand's South Island near Queenstown. Led by Bruce Meincke in March, five of us were fired up and ready to tackle this five day tramp. When walking for five days, the best views are unlikely to be revealed in the first five minutes (otherwise it would only be a ten minute walk), so it was easy to get excited about the prospect of what lay ahead. The scenery was similar for the first half-day, heading along the broad valley floor until arriving at the boundary of Mt Aspiring national park.



Scenery to Look Up to. Once in the national park, the track climbed steadily, crossing gullies that in spring pose a major avalanche hazard as the dark jagged peaks towering alongside shrug off their winter coats. The Rees-Dart track is so named because it goes up the Rees valley then across and down the valley of the Dart river. Many walks in New Zealand's mountain areas are like this, based around valleys with saddles rather than peaks providing the highlight views. Australia's mountains can be climbed without needing to be a mountaineer; just about every summit can be reached, every ridge hiked without requiring rope or specialised climbing equipment. Not so New Zealand. Bushwalkers can frequently gaze down upon all they survey, whilst trampers have to be content with gazing upwards in awe at impossibly jagged and steep mountain ranges buttressed by knife-edged spurs.

Not "Great" is still superb. New Zealand has designated nine of its most popular tramps as "Great Walks". Well known examples include the Milford and the Routeburn tracks. The Rees-Dart isn't one of them, but that doesn't mean it or others not in this category are inferior to the "Great" ones. The Great Walks are adapted to cope with large numbers of walkers (with generally less experience and fitness). Tracks are well constructed, huts have cooking facilities, but most importantly the accommodation needs to be booked in advance. The advantage is that you are guaranteed a bed, the disadvantage is the booking generally needs to be done well ahead of the walk (advisedly when arranging the travel), so there is no flexibility to change plans if the weather is bad.



The remaining walk up the Rees Valley was completed on the second morning, arriving at a saddle with views down three valleys. After an extended morning tea break, we headed down Snowy Creek, encountering the only precipitation of the five days about an hour later. It could hardly be called "rain", particularly by New Zealand standards, as most of us took several minutes to decide if it was worthwhile donning Goretexes and pack covers. Despite being light, it was persistent for an hour or so, so the sight of Dart Hut nestled down the valley was welcomed.

When "Not Great" can mean crowded. We were the third group to arrive at Dart Hut, but that wasn't enough to secure everyone a bunk bed, one of the disadvantages of the not "Great" walks. Not having a booking system provides the flexibility to choose favourable weather to undertake the walk. We'd been lucky, as our itinerary planned several weeks earlier happily coincided with an extended burst of fine weather, however many other travellers on a longer stay and less restricted schedule also chose this period to do the walk. Many people stay two nights at Dart Hut while they do a side-trip to Cascade Saddle, so most of the bunks had already been taken by those there for a second night. Bruce was carrying a tent for emergencies but found him and Gillian needing to use it. The rest of us weren't even carrying sleeping mats, but fortunately had arrived early enough to score a spare mattress and first pick as to which section of the floor to sleep on. According to the ranger, a new record was set that night; 58 people in a 32 bed hut.

New Zealand Walking (cont'd)



Extreme Wow Factor. Next day's trip to Cascade Saddle was the highlight of the walk. This was New Zealand "Wow Factor" at its upper level (see table, page 14). Blessed with about the most perfect weather imaginable, we set off in the early morning as the shadows gradually lifted from the Dart Valley. The walk turned out to have four distinct stages, each better than the last. The first was an hour long stroll along the Dart River until a bend marked the next stage. Now it was walking over moraine towards vast dirty blocks of ice that marked the lower extent of the glacier. The third section gradually revealed the mighty Dart glacier itself, as the track traversed gradually up the side of the valley, rounding upon a view of the pristine white glacier, dazzling in the clear sunshine. This view in itself was enough to make a five day trek worthwhile, so to reach Cascade Saddle and have breathtaking vistas exposed in several more directions was almost overwhelming.



Almost Paradise. New Zealand is attractive to hikers from North America because there isn't any wildlife that can eat them, and even Australians can enjoy the freedom of wandering barefoot in long grass without worrying about snakes. There is virtually nothing that can hurt you, but there are two irritants that make New Zealand walking fall short of perfection – sandflies and Israelis. New Zealand's indigenous pests became apparent by lunchtime on the first day of the Rees-Dart track. Sandflies aren't a problem while walking, but stop for a few minutes and you'll soon know if you are in their territory. They thin out above 900m altitude, but quite a bit of height is needed for them to totally disappear. Tips to deal with them are not to expose large areas of skin, use a moderate strength insect repellent and have a sandfly magnet in your group. Where their

concentration isn't high, they will prefer the magnet over everyone else – in our case we had Lisa!

New Zealand's equivalent to the cane toad as something introduced to benefit the economy but now in such plague proportions that they outnumber locals on many popular walks are Israelis. After completion of military service and advanced training in how to be loud, obnoxious and oppress Palestinians, it has become popular for Israelis to swarm away from their own region to the opposite end of the world in search of a far-flung country where they will be merely disliked instead of loathed – congratulations New Zealand. Those travelling solo or as couples are as pleasant as the majority of tourists from other nationalities, but unfortunately many of them travel in packs. Tips for enduring them are ear-plugs and leave early each day to fill up the best choice of bedrooms in the next hut.

Downstream to the Finish. The last two days walk down the Dart Valley couldn't match Cascade Saddle, but by any other standard still made for very pleasant, scenic walking, firstly through beech forest then open grassland lined on both sides by snow-capped peaks. Daleys Flat was the least attractive of the huts we stayed at on this trip, but it was still a welcome haven from the sandflies outside. The hut was filthy when we arrived and needed a thorough sweeping before we could feel settled in and have lunch. No surprise then to see from the log book that a dozen Israelis had stayed there the previous night...where's Hamas when you need them? The sight of a jet boat roaring up the Dart River was an indication we weren't far from the end of the walk. The jet boaters seemed to be enjoying themselves, but if only they knew what spectacle lay a couple of days further upstream.

Its network of huts and large choice of 4-6 day walks make New Zealand a better location than Australia for those wanting to do moderate-length treks without needing to carry too much weight. The popularity of NZ's walks means there are regular (often daily) bus services to the trailheads during the warmer months. Even if there isn't a scheduled service, a group of 5-6 is usually enough to make a charter minibus worthwhile. Once you've decided what walk(s) to do, it isn't difficult to find information on the internet about hut availability (if it is a Great walk) and transport timetables. A bit of time spent researching a trip should ensure it will run smoothly once you get there (thanks to Bruce for his work organising this one).

One Final Tip. Take good quality wet weather gear. Hopefully you'll be blessed with some fine clear days as we were, but New Zealand, particularly the Fjordland region is famous for its rainfall so be prepared. We were constantly amazed at example of tourists embarking on walks with what appeared to be little more than a spray jacket. Like alpine regions anywhere, be properly prepared for heavy rain or snow irrespective of what the weather forecast suggests and you'll enjoy whatever experience New Zealand chooses to provide for you.

The New Zealand 'Wow Factor'

What is 'wow factor'? It is a place or location where you look out at the scenery and you feel this is a wonderful place with breathtaking views or vistas. New Zealand has many of these places with snow covered mountain peaks, lakes, spectacular river valleys, waterfalls and dense lush rainforests.

Sometimes getting to these places requires tramping for up to five days over snow covered passes or crossing flooded rivers, so there is also an associated difficulty factor. Going to these places in winter conditions certainly increases the wow factor but also the difficulty.

Listed below are some of hooked NZ trumper Bruce Meincke's favourite places with a 'wow factor'.

		
Place and Location	Wow Factor (/10)	Difficulty Factor
Summer		
Routeburn Track and Conical Hill. (Mount Aspiring & Fiordland NPs) ①	8	5
Tongariro Crossing (Tongariro National Park, North Island)	8	4
Lake Angelus area and Angelus Hut (Nelson Lakes NP, South Is.) ②	8	3
Blue Lake, Lake Constance and Waiau Pass (Nelson Lakes NP)	9	8
Travers River and Travers Saddle (Nelson Lakes NP, South Is.)	8	5
Hopeless Creek to Sunset Saddle (Nelson Lakes NP, South Is.)	8	7
Summit of Mt. Taranaki (Egmont National Park, North Island) ③	9	8
Moss Pass (Nelson Lakes National Park, South Island)	9	7
Mountain views seen from Mt. Cook Village in summer / winter. (Mt. Cook National Park, South Island)	9 / 10	2
Mueller Hut in summer. (Mt. Cook National Park, South Island)	9	6
Cascade Saddle from Rees–Dart Track. (Mount Aspiring NP, Sth Is)	9	6
Mt Memphis from Dusky Track. (Fiordland NP, South Island) ⑤	8	8
Mt Luxmore, Kepler Track. (Fiordland NP, South Island)	8	4
Winter		
Tongariro Crossing. (Tongariro National Park, North Island). ④	9	6
Summit of Ngauruhoe (Tongariro National Park, North Island).	10	8
Summit of Mt. Ruapehu (Tongariro National Park, North Island). ⑥	10	9
Lake Angelus area and Angelus Hut. (Nelson Lakes NP, South Is.)	10	8
Milford Sound area. (Fiordland National Park, South Island)	9	1
Lake Mackenzie on the Routeburn Track (Fiordland NP, South Is)	9	5
		

Photo Competition 2010

Once again YHA Bushwalking is running a competition to encourage the photographers amongst its members to submit their favorite pictures from a recent or upcoming YHA bushwalk. Entries need to be received by November 8th 2010 (that's the Monday after the Cup Day weekend), winners will be announced at the end of year Christmas party. The judging will be done by staff from Wild magazine, with the exception of a "Members' Choice" award voted on by those attending the Christmas function.

As well as the general categories of Landscape, People and Wildlife, there will be a special one-off theme for this and competition. This year's special category is Fungi – with the damp weather upon us, there's plenty of colourful examples of these tucked away in the forests.

There will be prizes for:

- The best overall photograph (judged independently of the category a photo was submitted under)
- Best photograph in each category (a year's subscription to Wild or Outer Edge magazine)
- Members's Choice – favourite photograph as voted at the 2010 Christmas function.

Basic Conditions of Entry

1. Digital photograph must be sent via e-mail (JPEG format) to yhabushphotocomp@yahoo.com.au
Photo sizes must be between 500kB and 5MB.
2. All photographs must be from YHA Bushwalking trips on or after 9th November 2009.
3. Make sure you label each digital image with a title, also in your e-mail list the walk name, who led it and include your contact details and a brief description of the photograph.
4. A maximum of three photographs per category may be entered. As there are four categories, you can submit up to twelve entries. The Categories Are: Landscape, People, Wildlife & Fungi.
5. Digital manipulation is not permitted. Cropping, brightness, contrast and colour-balance adjustment is allowed, however the original image may not have any elements added, removed, relocated, resized or reshaped.
6. Wild Magazine and YHA Bushwalking have the right to publish any prize-winning entry.

Entries close 8th November 2010

The complete Terms & Conditions are at www.yhabush.org.au/Yeti/Winter10/photocomp.htm



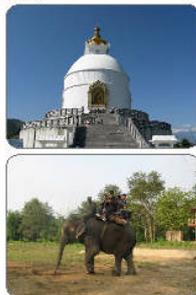
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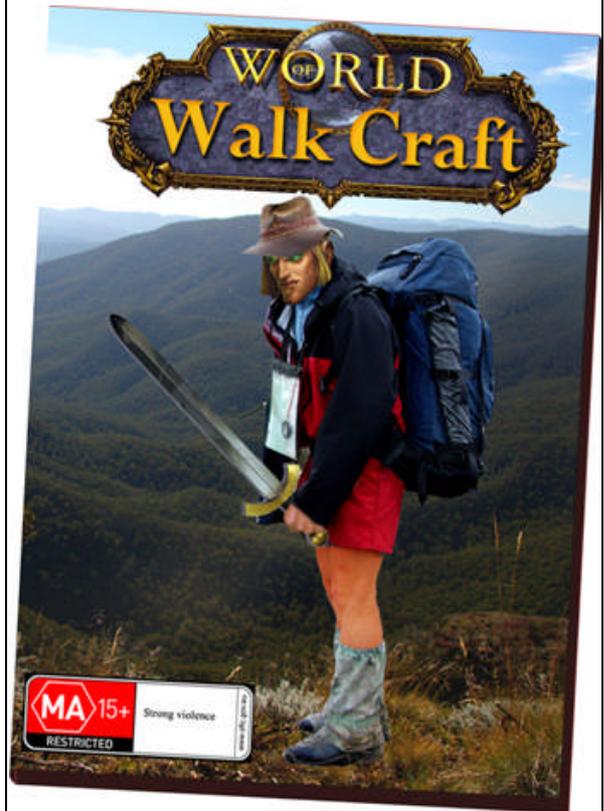
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Outdoor Adventure for the Playstation Generation

“World of WalkCraft” could be the means of getting Gen XXL interested in bushwalking – but it may not tempt them to go outdoors.

The objective is - by steadily building up your strength, navigation skill and collection of vital equipment - to complete as many quests as possible. There are over 100 in this version, including all of the well-known bushwalks (the Overland Track, Croajingalong, along with some more obscure but challenging ones (Vanishing Falls anyone?). The eight levels range from very easy (Yarra Trail), medium (Great Ocean Walk) through to extremely difficult (the full Alpine Walking Track in winter).

Starting off with just an empty backpack, in order to successfully complete quests the pack needs to be filled with bushwalking equipment plus food and water. Some items you find, some you obtain by bartering with other characters, but mainly you rely on using gold credits to purchase them from the intriguingly named “Reece McKubin’s Emporium”. Gold credits are earned whenever a quest is completed. Items can’t be added indefinitely to the backpack – you have a weight limit, exceed that and further movement is impossible until enough objects are discarded to drop below it. The weight limit increases as strength is gained from completing quests. Progressing to the higher levels isn’t quick or easy; even with sufficient strength to carry a large weight, the only way to include the amount of equipment needed to survive the advanced quests is to purchase the lightweight but very expensive versions, hence plenty of gold credits need to be accumulated first.



Very photorealistic graphics are used for the quests, with the option to overlay a map on the scene in front of you (although it’s your task to orient it properly). Navigation is only part of the skill required. Enough food needs to be consumed and regular supplies of water found to keep your energy and hydration levels up; if either falls below critical level, strength will start to drop, meaning you may not be able to carry as much. Variable weather is well simulated, with visibility ranging from crystal clear to white-out as shown in the screenshots to the left. Blizzards, flooded rivers, bushfires and scaling cliff faces are just some of the challenges likely to be encountered on the more difficult quests.

A controversial part of World of WalkCraft is the combat that begins once the fourth level is reached. As rival bushwalking gangs encroach on your territory, it’s kill or be killed using whatever means are at your disposal. These range from making use of the natural surroundings (eg dropping rocks or flinging snakes onto your enemies), to acquiring weaponry ranging from broadswords (titanium alloy of course) to bazookas. Beware of being lured into traps; some of the gear found lying around may not quite be what it appears to be. Being maimed by a pair of exploding gaiters is particularly nasty and not for the squeamish. Responding to criticism that this aspect of the game isn’t a realistic depiction of bushwalking, its creators claim that it is meant to be a futuristic vision, “Bushwalking 2030”; more likely it’s put there to appeal to their main target market. For those who prefer their bushwalking a bit less apocalyptic and just want to focus on challenging nature and themselves, combat mode can be disabled in the game’s set-up menu.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

2.8GHz Intel Pentium D or equivalent *
 1GB RAM * 15GB hard disk space *
 Nvidia GeForce 6800/ATI Radeon X700
 graphics or better * Windows XP SP3.

VERDICT: ★★★★★ **PRICE:** \$79.95 Single or multi-player options
FOR: Spectacular graphics, some challenging and exciting simulations, weeks of entertainment.
AGAINST: Some of the longer quests can become a bit tedious, the violence may not appeal to all tastes.