

YETI

SUMMER JANUARY 2019



It's the Cake Walk, but why is leader Chris
on the phone while the others look on anxiously?
See story inside. Photo: JOHN MORRIS

MISSION STATEMENT

The Victorian YHA Bushwalking Club provides safe and enjoyable bushwalking experiences, fostering friendship and appreciation of our natural environment.



Happy 2019

I hope everyone has had a very Merry Christmas and is now looking forward to a new year of walking adventures.

Should you need a little motivation, try and have a chat to your fellow walkers.

From where I sit, it's clear that everyone has a story to share and we are all the better for hearing it.

There is the story of Sharon and Rafal, who took their young children on an overnight hike along the Great Ocean Walk. It was not all smooth sailing, but their tale of preparation and determination is inspiring to say the least.

Then there's the satisfaction of setting yourself a goal and achieving it, as Leona Xu did on completion of a pack carry trip to Mt Cole State Forest - Beeripmo Circuit last November, reaching her target of 52 hikes a year a month ahead of deadline.

These are but two of the awesome experiences shared by our members. I hope we will get to hear and share more in the months ahead.

As always, email your stories to yetieditor@yhabush.org.au

Enjoy your walks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Yeti".

Yeti editor

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2018 was particularly busy



THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Kris Peach

Happy New Year! We have a great summer program with plenty to choose from, so a big thank you to all our leaders and the Walk Secretary.

Reflecting on the year past, 2018 has been a particularly busy year for the club. We have, in addition to putting together four great walk programs:

- Started our membership program
- Introduced a new car sharing cost policy
- Launch a leaders guide and held a leaders' lunch
- Introduced alternative meeting points for Sunday walks
- Nearly finalised our new operational guidelines
- Drafted a code of conduct to be circulated
- Drafted a social and non-bushwalking policy to be circulated for comment by leaders
- Reimagined our end-of-year function, combining walks and pizza at the Grand Hotel in Healesville. Special thanks to our Social Secretary, Jayne Anderson, walk leaders Ken Sussex and Sonya Radywyl and bus coordinator Celine Savage for organising a great day
- Presented the inaugural Jonas Lea Memorial Award
- Made progress on updating our website

Member program

The number of member applications since our September 1 launch indicates our strategy to develop a loyalty program to attract and retain bushwalkers is on track. For a \$35 annual fee, members enjoy:

- Free walks
- Walk Program provided a week in advance
- Discounts on social events
- Members only functions
- Discounts (usually 10%) at outdoor retailers
- Ability to comment and vote

Member cards are now electronic so when you receive yours, please save it on your phone or print it yourself. Walk leaders are required to charge the full walk fee if you don't show your card.

Membership requests may take a few weeks to action. In the interim, leaders will accept evidence of your \$35 payment as a substitute.

Club Night

Yes we still run club nights. We normally do not run one in December as there are too many competing activities. Unfortunately, the November event didn't come to pass due to a late cancellation from Backpacking Lite, which was supposed to give us an outdoor gear experience.

We are going to try different venues and types of activities to see if we can improve on club nights.

Any suggestions would be much appreciated.

Social and non-bushwalking activities

Our 2nd strategic direction to develop complementary social and non-bushwalking activities is on track. We will be providing leaders with a draft policy for feedback shortly.

The key objective is that we do want to be predominantly a bushwalking club. However, we need to balance that with the fact that not all our walkers are able to walk on weekends.

Having some urban/metro weekday walks that let them still participate is therefore appropriate. Activities that can improve bushwalking skills like navigation skills, first aid and rock climbing are also important.

We will be looking to have more activities combining walks and social activities like lunch/dinner or the occasional purely social drinks/dinner.

Congratulations and thanks

Congratulations to Andrew Francis, the recipient of the inaugural Jonas Lea Memorial Award for the person best representing the values of the Club.

Condolences and sincere thanks to Jonas's family for their generosity of spirit in establishing the award.

A big thank you to all walk leaders for their great efforts in 2018. Also big thanks to my fellow committee members who have contributed not only time but also some great ideas.

Happy walking! Feedback is always welcome.
Email president@yhabush.org.au.

Save the date

September 8, 2019 for our 80th birthday celebrations

2019 is an important year for our club. August 26 is Richard Schirrmann Day, celebrating the 110th anniversary of the founding of youth hostels while September 4 marks the 80th anniversary of the first Australian YHA meeting at Melbourne Town Hall and the start of YHA Bushwalking Victoria.

To celebrate, we will be holding a joint event with YHA Australia in Warrandyte, the site of the first hostel in Melbourne, on Sunday, September 8. Details to come.



Mission accomplished

**Beeripmo Circuit
Beginner's Pack Carry,
21km Medium
Saturday, November 17
to Sunday, November 18, 2018
Walk leader: Craig Beer**

The weather was good and a roaring fire in the evening kept the cold at bay.

For the group who made the Beeripmo Circuit, beginner's pack carry, it was an opportunity to test their fitness, go a little deeper with nature and enjoy more down time getting to know their fellow walkers.

For Leona Xu, the walk also marked a personal achievement, ticking

off a challenge she set herself in December 2017.

"I was very happy to finish my challenge, which was to do 52 hikes in a year," she said, adding that most of the hikes were done with YHA Bushwalking.

Reflecting on her experience, she said it helped that she prepared early. She also learned about injury management along the way.

"By August-September, I had done 40 hikes. I was overusing my muscle so suffering from fatigue in my left foot. This problem reminds me of the importance to look after myself," Leona said.

With the help of a podiatrist, she invested in orthotics, shoes and socks that were the right fit and used bandages where needed.

"I learnt to wrap my ankles and after a couple of weeks was able to maintain my walking regime to complete my 52 week challenge," she said.

Note: John Morris has made a video of the trip. It's well worth a view, if only to see Craig dance. Go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9djRT0lpA8s&feature=youtu.be>



Happy at Beeripmo. For Leona (front, in purple t-shirt, sitting on sign) the trip marks the successful completion of 52 hikes for the year.
Photos: John Morris.



Sonya taps into Santa to lead her Christmas walk; Club president Kris and fellow walkers strike a pink theme; and then it was time to have a pizza and chill at Grand Hotel, Healesville.



Santa takes to the bush

Our Christmas party on December 2 included what the club does best – walking. There were not one but two walks, led by Ken Sussex and Sonya Radywyl. The organisers had done

a great job coordinating a bus trip and finger food lunch at Grand Hotel, Healesville. A highlight of the day was the presentation of the inaugural Jonas Lea Memorial Award.



Jonas Lea Memorial Award

Andrew Francis receives
inaugural Jonas Lea Award.

Congratulations to Craig Beer, who
led the most multi-day walks and
Erryn Stephens who led
the most day walks in 2018.

The award is in memory of Jonas Lea
who passed away in March, 2018.

He led his first walk with us in the
winter of 2015. He was always
willing to help and often offered to
fill missing gaps in the walk program.
Keen to improve his skills, Jonas
participated in leader and navigation
training events.
Many of you will have enjoyed
chatting with him and appreciated
his passion for bushwalking,
even when he was not well.

Jonas's family wanted to recognise
the importance of our club and
bushwalking to Jonas. His mum,
Judy, said "the YHA Bushwalking
Club gave him a new lease of life
and he loved the times he
spent with you all."

The family generously provided
a Paddy Palin gift voucher for the
person making the most significant
contribution to our club and best
represents our values.

On behalf of the Committee I
would like to say how much we
appreciated Jonas's contributions
and thank his family for creating
the award.

So, I am very pleased to announce
the recipient of the inaugural Jonas
Lea Award is Andrew Francis.

Andrew is one of the quiet, but
important achievers of our club.
He regularly leads walks. He is also
the person who manages Meetup
behind the scene. If you have joined
through Meetup, he is the one who
sends you the welcome email and
posts most of the Sunday Walk

Meetup invitations. Andrew often
helps the leaders provide more
colour and detail of their walks.
Many of these walks would not
happen without his support.

Andrew likes to introduce changes
to recycled walks and create new
walks, which we all benefit from.
In the words of his nominee, he
is the best administrator in town
and organises everything from A to
Z. His attention to detail has been
invaluable support for many new
leaders. Walkers have also benefited
from his knowledge and experience.
He has a calm, pleasant manner in
leading his walks that is very helpful.
He also provides thoughtful and
helpful comments on proposals
made by the Committee.

On behalf of the Committee
please accept our grateful thanks
for all your effort over a number of
years. And on behalf of Jonas' family,
congratulations Andrew, on a very
well deserved acknowledgement.

Kris Peach,
President, YHA
Bushwalking Victoria



Andrew Francis, calm, organised and "the
best administrator in town".



Jonas Lea and Hannah at the Essendon
Incinerator Gallery, 2017. Hannah led a
memorial walk for Jonas to Sailor Falls on
April 8, 2018.

Meet our volunteer

Ken Sussex has been a general committee member since 2015. He was Walks Secretary 2009 – 2015. Between 1988 and 2009, he was the YHA Delegate to the Bushwalking Federation Search and Rescue Section.

Asked why he decided to volunteer at the club, Ken replied: "Probably like most people, I was encouraged to by members of the Committee. They wanted someone to take on the role of Search and Rescue Delegate, and I had been warmly welcomed into the club when I joined, so I was happy take on the role when asked." And here's his story of how he came to be a YHA Bushwalking Victoria member:

"I joined YHA in 1977, but my first walk with the club wasn't until a couple of years later. It was on a Cup Weekend walk led by Merilyn Wimpy, an attempt at the Viking Circuit.

On the second night, we were camped in among the snow gums in a very sheltered saddle just South of The Viking when we were hit with an unseasonal blizzard. It was quite an experience, but some of the party were walking in track shoes, so the next day we had to back track.

Wouldn't have been safe trying to traverse the Cross Cut in six inches to a foot of snow and ice.

That wasn't my first walk though. I started young. My parents took us on day walks when we were kids. Then I walked with Scouts. I took a big interest in navigation, initially because I needed to know what I was getting myself in for, so I could pace myself up the hills.

Then when I was at Swinburne, I joined the Outdoors Club there and was the Bushwalks and Ski Touring Coordinator. It was actually on an Outdoors Club walk, a traverse from Kiandra to Thredbo in 1977 that I joined YHA to stay at the old Thredbo YHA Hostel at the end of our trip.

Then as a member of YHA, I received the quarterly Hosteller Magazine, and at the back of each magazine, there was the YHA Bushwalking Club walk program.

"Walking has always been a big part of my life. Youth Work is another major part, but that's another story. I love getting out into the bush though. I don't really enjoy climbing up hills, but love it when I get to the top.

The folds of mountains disappearing in the distance, sometimes in every direction. I love watching our big Wedged Tail Eagles soaring in the sky. I love hearing the cry of the 'larrikins of the bush', the largest of our cockatoos, the Yellow Tail Black Cockatoos. I love our snow gums. I love camping beside a mountain stream and listening to its babble as I drift off to sleep. I love the sunsets, and the sunrises, and the clear starry nights, and the warmth and glow of the camp fire ... and the camaraderie."



Looking ahead **Keppel Hut**

Saturday, January 12 2019

Grade: Medium +

Walk leader: Derek Gomez

Distance: 22km if both the Hut and Summit hikes are completed

Derek says:

Having done cross country skiing at Lake Mountain for many years, I thought summer would be an opportune time to explore the lovely surroundings on a hike from Lake Mountain to Keppel Hut and Lake Mountain summit.

The trees in this area are mainly Snow Gum woodland, but Alpine Ash and Mountain Hickory Wattle are also abundant.

From Lake Mountain car park we will

first hike to Triangle Junction, then to Panorama and Hut trails from where the track to Keppel Hut is clearly marked.

This track descends quite steeply in parts, with some spectacular views towards Mt Margaret.

Keppel Hut is a popular camping spot on the headwaters of the Keppel Hut Creek. Some of the flora and fauna in the area includes Lake Mountain Grevillea, Alpine Mint, Alpine Shaggy Pea and the Long Leaf Wax Flower.



Cake walk spiced with drama

The annual cake walk is always popular, with everyone bringing a cake to share on stops along the way.

The walk, on Sunday December 9 led by Chris Marney, covered Powelltown to Seven Acre Rock. It was a 20km walk, graded medium-hard.

As Chris reminded everyone in his Meetup notice, "the cakewalk does not take its name from the walk itself being a 'piece of cake'. It takes its name from the pieces of cake that you will consume on this walk."

As it sometimes happens, the walk threw up a series of unfortunate events and will be remembered for much more than the delicious cakes consumed that day.

The journey hit a snag early when a new walker began to struggle on the first of many hills.

Realising there's no way he would make the walk, regular walker Hannah agreed to return to her car with him, with a plan to drive and meet the rest of the group at a halfway point.

However, when the group arrived at the agreed meeting point, Hannah and her charge were nowhere to be seen. Luckily, Chris could reach Hannah by phone and discovered that the new walker had blisters

and so they decided to wait out the day at the pub in Powelltown.

This was where unfortunate event number two happened. The new walker had somehow locked Hannah's car, with the car keys still in them. Worse, both their house keys were also locked in the car.

Chris had Hannah ring the RACV, who came but couldn't unlock her car. This created consternation, as Hannah had a full car load of passengers from Flagstaff station, which potentially meant 5 people without rides for the return journey. Thankfully, a few drivers had come to the walk directly, so they were able to complete the walk and had enough spots to fit everyone.

Chris and another passenger were travelling with Grace, who had kindly agreed to drive back to Powelltown to pick up Hannah and company.

Just as one was about to breathe a sigh of relief, Grace's car got a puncture on a dirt road. She didn't have RACV cover, and none of them had ever changed a tyre. Luckily, they managed to reach regular walker John Morris on the phone. John had set off home a few minutes earlier with veteran walker John Belfio, who Chris guessed correctly was the best bet to help get the tyre changed.

The duo returned and John Belfio did indeed get the tyre changed but as it was only an emergency spare, it was necessary for the group to take it slow. It was a long day, with everyone returning to Flinders St about 8.20pm.

Hannah had to call a locksmith to get into her house. Luckily she has spare car keys. The new walker got into his place via an open window. The next day, John Belfio drove Hannah to Powelltown to retrieve her car, whereupon she returned the new walker's house keys and he paid half her locksmith cost.

Grace also returned home safely with plans to arrange for a new tyre pronto.

John Morris, when contacted about the walk, said it was a series of unfortunate events, but it also showed that when struck by problems, the group rallied. The leader was flexible and made changes as needed. Everyone who can, offered to help.

Drama aside, John said it was a great day of walk and cakes and he has the video to prove it:

<https://youtu.be/YED52Tw6zwU>





Changing tyre calls for team work; it was a case of cakes on the rock for lunch; and a kookaburra came to join the party.

Photos: Helina, Hannah and John Morris



Melbourne Cup weekend a great excuse to hike up Mt Cobbler

By Erryn Stephens

It was with some trepidation that I added a pack carry hike to my repertoire as a walk leader.

Those who know me well know that I have a love/hate affair with pack carries. However, after seeing a photo of Mt Cobbler in a magazine, and recognising it as the backdrop to Craig's Hut in the Man from Snowy River movies, I just had to get there, even if that meant slogging it out carrying a pack for three days.

Although it is relatively low in stature at 1628m high, Mt Cobbler is one of the most recognisable peaks in the Victorian Alps. It is also referred to as Indian Head due to its

prominent outline, which you guessed it resembles the outline of an American Indian Chief.

Being my first pack carry as a leader I chose to do the easier option of the Cobbler Plateau Circuit (a 31km circuit).

I was lucky to rope in nine others to join me on this walk and I couldn't have asked for a better group to share this experience with.

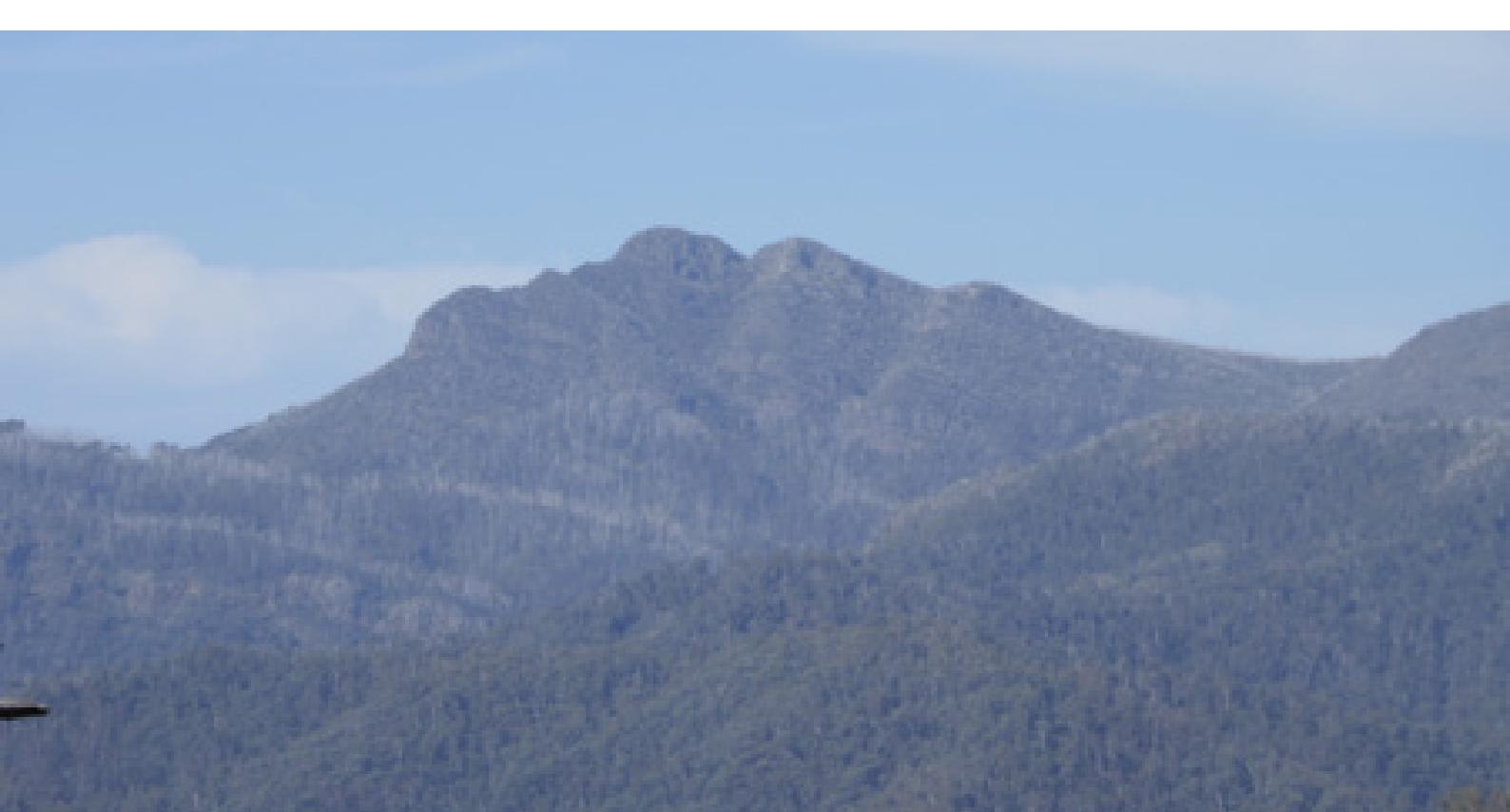
Leaving Melbourne on the Saturday we stopped in Mansfield for a late lunch and stock up on supplies. We then headed off to our campsite for the night at King Hut

Campground, situated next to the King River. The drive in was fairly long and winding (1.5 hours of dirt roads).

We arrived at about 5pm and were lucky to find a nice open clearing for our campsite and a large firepit.

After pitching our tents and some exploration, we set about making a fire. At one point Mei decided to throw on just about all our firewood causing a fireworks display to rival Melbourne's end-of-year celebrations!

Our hike next morning began from King Hut up the Muesli Spur Track. This was hard to find at first as any



Mt Cobbler, aka Indian Head. Photo: Peter Leonard





Rock scrambling up Muesli Spur Track. Photo: Allison Stephens

signage was well off the main road but once we were on it we were away, or so we thought until the track disappeared at a clearing.

After some considerable bush bashing and expert navigation from Kyle and Peter we were back on track up the spur.

It was fairly steep in parts and there was some rock scrambling to be had. However, the views across to Mt Speculation reassured us that the climb was worth it.

At the top of the spur we caught our first glimpse of Mt Cobbler and I must confess I was panicking a little as to how I was going to get myself up there.

After coming down the other side of Muesli Spur we walked along a flat 4WD track for about 4km to Lake Cobbler, where we dropped

our packs for a short side trip to Dandongadale Falls, the highest waterfall in Victoria at 255m. Even before we made it to the clearing at the top of the falls we could feel tiny droplets on our faces.

The view from the top was simply breathtaking. Just trees and mountains to the horizon.



Lookout from the top of Dandongadale Falls. Photo: Mei Li.



Summit of Mt Cobbler, the nose of the Indian Head. If you look closely you might see Erryn, Kyle and Peter waving.
Photo: Allison Stephens

After lunch at the lake, and a swim for some, we restocked our water supplies and proceeded up the 4km Mt Cobbler track to our next campsite, a saddle point about 1.5km from the summit.

Despite feeling exhausted from the long day hiking, half of the group decided to do the 3km return trip to the summit (sans packs) to watch the sunrise. And just as well!

Unfortunately for the rest of the group who had elected to do the

summit walk the next morning, the weather turned and rain and clouds meant there was zero visibility from the top.

The view from the top of Mt Cobbler was well worth the climb – 360-degree views of the Victorian Alps! The rocky scramble to the summit (the nose of the Indian head) was an added bonus.

It looked at first to be inaccessible, but there is a small passage between the rocks to the top.

Standing on top of Mt Cobbler, I was in complete awe. As far as I could see it was just mountains and trees with no signs of human existence.

I felt completely relaxed. My earlier feeling of exhaustion had made way for a feeling of calmness and peace at being at one with nature.

As the native American saying goes: “The human spirit needs places where nature has not been rearranged by the hand of man.”



Arriving back at our campsite about 8pm we found the others had done the hard work for us and started the fire. We proceeded to have dinner and before we knew it was 10pm. We all retired to bed just as the rain started to softly fall.

Leaving our campsite at nine the next morning we headed back to King Hut Campground via Speculation Road. The return trip only took us three hours and we arrived at our cars just after lunchtime.

Originally, we had planned to camp the Monday night and head back Tuesday, stopping to do a short return walk to Craig's Hut. However, with heavy rain scheduled for Tuesday, we decided to bail early and take advantage of resting up at home on Tuesday before heading back to work.

Overall this was a challenging, but not overly difficult, walk that would suit hikers with intermediate pack carry experience.



From left:: Allison Stephens, Philippa Day, Kudzie Yonah, Lisa Milne, Erryn Stephens, Kyle Schoneville, Leona Xu, Peter Leonard, Mei Li. Photo: Spira Stojanovik

References for this walk:

'Bushwalks in the Victorian Alps – Exploring the High Country with Glenn van der Kniff', Open Spaces Publishing, 2004

Trail Hiking Australia – www.trailhiking.com.au/mount-cobbler-plateau-circuit/

Blast from the past

Sleepless in Walhalla

This year marks the YHA Bushwalking 80th anniversary. Stuart Hanham doesn't go back that far, but he remembers well a couple of camping trips to Walhalla, oh, all those years ago. He recalls...

In the early 2000s, the Club had a base camp at Walhalla, in the camping ground at the northern end of town. We arrived late on a Friday night, to find wet, cold and muddy conditions; not ideal for setting up tents. Some of us huddled together under a small stone shelter with no sides, and a few considered trying to sleep there.

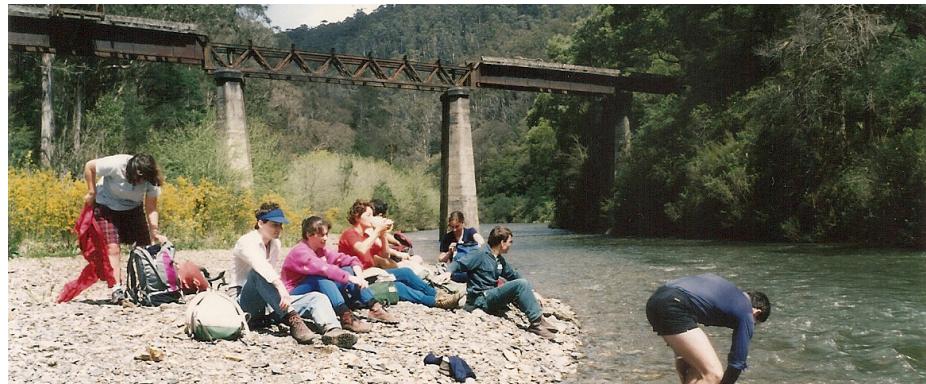
A member of the group suggested looking in town for accommodation, so four of us drove down and discovered the recently rebuilt Star Hotel. Although it was closed at that time of the night, we found a door bell, rang it and were welcomed in by the owner. He offered a large room for \$50 per head, so we agreed and settled in for a warm, dry and comfortable night. Unfortunately, the room was too hot and I hardly slept!

Breakfast was included, so we packed up and rejoined the campers at about 9am as if nothing unusual had happened. It was a tough start to the weekend!

On a previous base camp to the same spot in 1989 (before the Star Hotel was reopened), the conditions were similar. It was a case of putting up the tents in the mud and rain. One girl had a borrowed tent and didn't know how to put it up, so another walker kindly did the job for her. Alas, he erected the tent inside-out, it leaked and she wasn't happy.

On one evening in the camp ground, there was a buck's party – not involving YHA, of course! The buck ran around naked, being tracked by a spot light and trying to escape his "friends". He ran into a toilet block, but was captured, tied up and led back to their camp. The party revved up, and some, probably merry members, started to cut down tall trees in the camping ground to feed their fire.

Our "inside-out tent man" became quite angry and confronted them. As a result, they left a half cut tree waiting to fall on someone. Walhalla turned out to be not such a quiet, sleepy place, after all.



Are we *there* yet? *Overnight pack carry with kids*

Sharon Saing and hubby Rafal recently realised a dream to take their young children on an overnight pack carry. It was on the Saturday after Victoria's Labour Day weekend. She recounts the experience...

We have taken our children on day hikes from an infant age and for years, contemplated doing an overnighter with them.

When our youngest, Miranda, turned 5, this goal became a reality as we took the opportunity to hike alongside an experienced family of hikers who have completed many overnight pack carries. With excitement, we agreed to do a segment of the Great Ocean Walk.

Our preparation took months as we searched eBay for 100L and 80L backpacks. We tested the packing and unpacking to get the right weight, light enough to fit the essentials including kids' toys! We ended up with 18kg in each backpack. I carried all the food and snacks for two days, 6 litres of water, clothes to suit all weather conditions, two sleeping mats, small pillows, sleeping bags and swim wear. Husband Rafal carried the second backpack with towels, small pillows, sleeping mats, thongs, toiletry, torches, cutlery, a tent and more water.

The night before the big day, news came that open fires at campsites were banned due to a heatwave across Victoria. We quickly repacked our bags, removing cooking equipment such as stove, fuel and noodles and replacing these with food that required no cooking.

The morning of the big hike arrived and we left Melbourne about 7.30am. We had breakfast along the way and met up with our hiking friends in Apollo Bay before arriving at the Cape Otway lighthouse car park. Here we changed, put on hiking boots, sunscreen and packs,

ready to start the walk.

While the big boys arranged the car shuffle to Johanna Beach and back, we started the walk.

The two 8-year-old boys (one from each family) led and carried their own packs with water and snacks, followed by my daughter and us two mums.

The weather was warm with a clear sky and cool breeze -perfect conditions for our first day on the trail. The kids chatted, spotted a few lookouts, plants, insects and reading signs. We reached a junction after 7km and stopped for lunch. After an hour, during which our drivers from the car shuffle had caught up with us, it was time to set out again.

As we did not want to arrive late at the campsite, we decided to avoid the beach track which cut an hour off the overall walking time. Over the next few kilometers we climbed hills, and tackle windy tracks hidden by thick and tall shrubs.

When we thought the campsite became visible, the trail seemed to just keep winding and going on forever. By this time the 5-year-old started whining as it all became too much for her. I carried her on and off with the pack on my back. She demanded that we never bring her on a holiday like this again, and to distract her, we began counting bull ants and finding butterflies.

Occasionally I treated her with lollies and chocolate, and she was much happier to keep walking. Pushing through a few more kilometers on a thick sandy path underneath tree

archways, we finally descended on Aireys Inlet. We crossed the bridge and climbed the stairs to find a spot to set up our tents.

We spent the afternoon laying on the beach while the kids swam and enjoyed the beautiful surrounds. At dinner time, the kids helped set up cutlery, mixing cooked tuna pasta with corn and eating well-deserved chocolate, chips and fruits.

It was an enjoyable evening with the kids playing games and running around having fun.

After the sun sets, we rolled out mats and sleeping bags and pillows ready for bed. Our tent was in a great spot, sheltered from the wind and rain, and we could hear the ocean waves crashing on the beach.





The next morning, we had boiled eggs, bread, fruit and peanut butter for breakfast. It was very cold and thick fog hung low from the overnight rain.

Breakfast one, we packed and put on wet weather gear, and headed for Johanna Beach car park.

The return walk was longer, with a tougher trail closer to the rugged cliff and a greener scenery with ferns and wooden stairs to climb.

The path was wide in one section, slippery and muddy in another. One hour into the walk, the sky turned dark, and suddenly hail and rain came down on us.

We were in an open area with no shelter to run for cover, so we sped

up the hill on the slippery path in our soggy boots. The kids were frightened and wished for the end of the walk.

We were drenched below our knees from this sudden storm, and the track became dangerous from flash flooding, such that we had to move slowly again. After half an hour, the storm stopped and the sun came out - we have survived!



All packed up and ready to go.





With patches of grey sky, we had a few breaks during the day, including 20mins for lunch and toilet stops, occasionally enjoying lollies and beef jerky at the many lookouts. This section of the Great Ocean Rd is stunning, with lush vegetation and rainforest.

We followed the path for 4km more and descended steeply from the bush to the beach, unaware of the sandstorm on the exposed beach area.

From here, we bravely defended ourselves from the very strong blowing sand. The kids were ahead of me for all of this section and even caught up with a group of hikers who started the hike before us this morning.

Looking into the distance, I saw a line of people turning off the beach, so I knew we were close to the end, but with sand continuing to be whipped up by a gale-force wind and a huge sea swell it felt like another hour on the last 2km.

To lighten my pack, I drank my remaining water, and took off my shoes and socks. The sand was biting my arms, legs and getting inside my clothes.

Finally, I made it to Johanna Beach car park! Meanwhile, Rafal had just finished removing a huge leech from his ankle. It had been feeding on him for the last two hours!

Although exhausted, we gathered, laughed and danced. It was worth every minute of it. I feel proud of our kids. At just five and eight years of age, they have accomplished their first overnight hike of 25km.
Well done Dante and Miranda!



Upper Murray highs during Grand Final weekend

By Erryn Stephens

What I have come to love most about hiking is the people I meet and the friendships formed.

As an active poster on Instagram (@girlgonehiking) some of the friendships I have formed have been purely virtual.

After discovering that one of my insta-friends (@remoteandwild) was in fact a member and leader with the Border Bushwalking Club based in Albury/Wodonga I suggested we organise an intra-club hike.

Deb offered to show us around "her backyard" with a three day walk in the Upper Murray region behind Lake Hume. Members of YHA travelled up and stayed at the Lake Hume Tourist Park, which gave us easy access to Mount Granya State Park, Mount Lawson State Park and Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park.

On day one we did the 10km return walk to the top of Pine Mountain. We were joined by five members from the Border Bushwalking Club...

two of whom were in their 70s and still gunning it! I hope that I can be that fit when I am their age.

Although the shorter walk of the three, this proved to be the hardest with some steep climbs over imposing rocky outcrops. Pine Mountain is actually a gigantic rock monolith reputedly one and half times as large as Uluru. Standing at the top we could just make out Mt Kosciuszko on the horizon.

On day two we did the 14km return

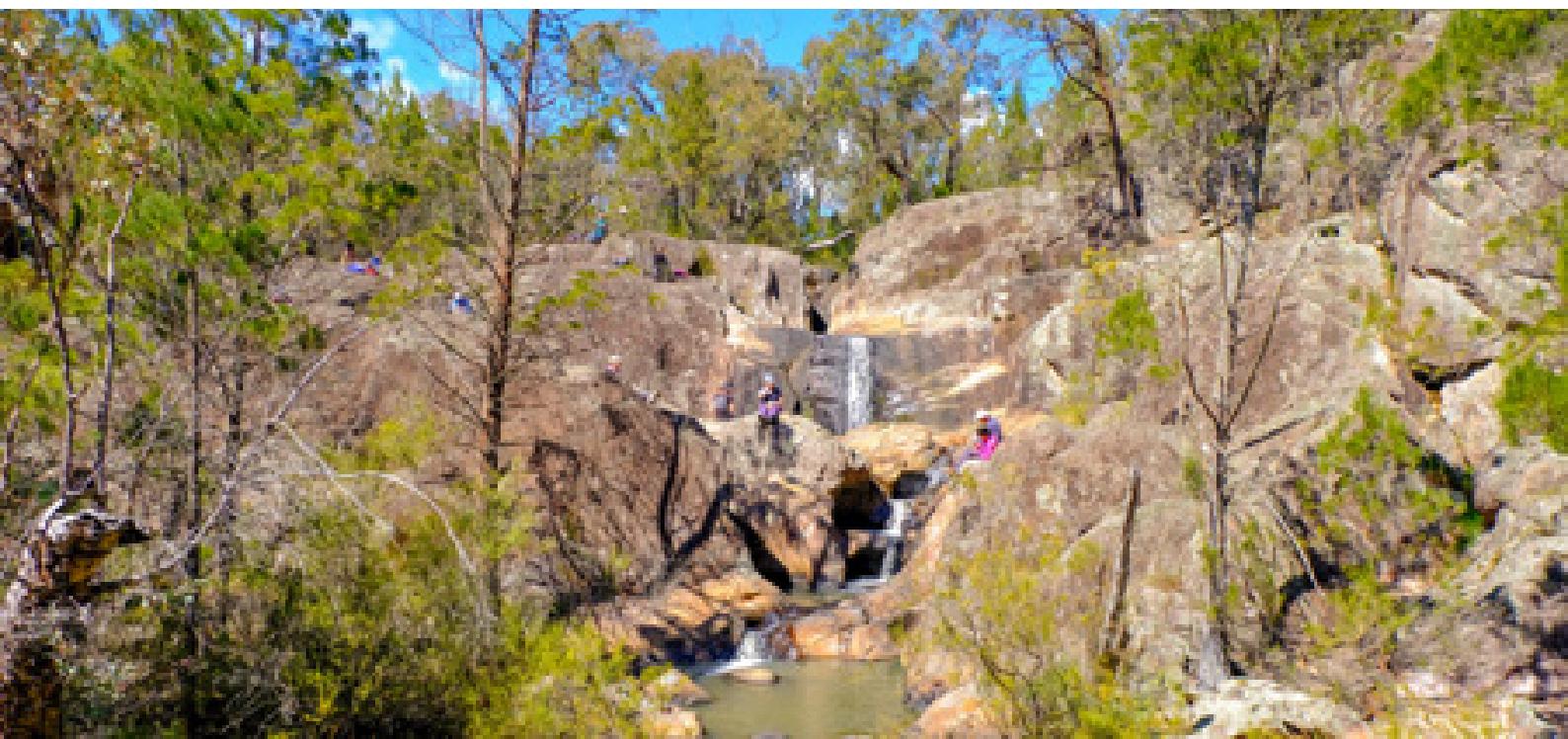


Summit of Pine Mountain with Mt Kosciuszko directly behind.

From left: Irina, Dani Langma, David Moore, Erryn Stephens, Richard Lawrence, Peter Leonard, Leona Xu, Doug Miers, Jan Cooney, Craig Beer. Photo: John Morris

YHA members not pictured - John Morris, Julie Blakiston, Lisa Milne, Miriam Gribble, Naomi Ellis.





Flaggy Creek Gorge. Photo: John Morris

walk to Flaggy Creek Gorge, a pretty spot with a series of cascading waterfalls. It was a pity we couldn't stay longer at the Gorge, but as daylight savings had not started we had to turn around before sunset. The walk in and out was undulating with a lot of moderately steep ups and downs but not overly difficult.

On our last day we undertook the 10.4km return walk up Mt Granya. Again, we were joined by members of the Border Bushwalking Club, some of whom had come from as far away as Beechworth.

Overall, it was a thoroughly enjoyable weekend – connecting with old and new friends – and sharing our hiking adventures. It is hoped that we can plan more intra-club hikes for the future.... so stayed tuned!



Members of YHA Bushwalking Club Victoria and the Border Bushwalking Club at the start of the Mt Granya Walk.