



Yeti



The official magazine of YHA Bushwalking Victoria Club. October to December 2023

Issue 54



Around The Club

A couple of special mentions for some upcoming trips – we have an accommodated trip to Blue Mountains over Melbourne Cup Weekend, led by David Sale. If you have not been to the Blue Mountains, then opportunity knocks; one of Australia's premier hiking and tourism regions.

We are visiting Adelaide over Easter 2024. The trip is broken into two parts; Adelaide itself, with a selection of hikes accessible via public transport, and further afield to the Adelaide Hills, Barossa and Limestone Coast. You can sign up for all or part of this trip, with a total of 8 hikes on offer.

We have a High Country trip scheduled over Christmas/New Year week; Mount Hotham and Dinner Plain and a second High Country trip scheduled for Australia Day week to Falls Creek. These High Country trips are extremely popular and a great way to spend a week in summer. The Mount Hotham trip will summit Mount Feathertop, and the Falls Creek trip will summit Mount Bogong; Victoria's highest peaks!

A number of pack carry trips are also scheduled, such as Little Desert National Park in far western Victoria, Mount Difficult at the Grampians and Mount McLeod on the Buffalo Plateau.

We also have an upcoming Christmas party; watch our website for details!

YHA Bushwalking Club's Committee

Clubs need organisers and leaders to work! Like most clubs, we have a committee and you will meet some of our committee members on hikes and social events.

President	Adnan Lovic	(president@yhabush.org.au)
Walks Secretary	Doug Miers	(walkssecretary@yhabush.org.au)
Treasurer	Richard Lawrence	(treasurer@yhabush.org.au)
Secretary	Tanveer Ahmed	(secretary@yhabush.org.au)
Communications	Sonya Radwyl	(contact@yhabush.org.au)
Club Nights	Jann Cooney	(committee@yhabush.org.au)
Social Events	Angelica Payne	(committee@yhabush.org.au)
Everything Else	Ken Sussex	(committee@yhabush.org.au)

Non Committee:

Yeti Editor	Craig Beer	(yetieditor@yhabush.org.au)
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New Leaders and New Members

A special shout out to any new members who have joined the club! Also, an extra special shout out to our newest leaders, . . . Greta Cunningham, Bill Xiang, Lloyd Paramasamy, Charmaine White, Ruth Stewart, Prashant Mahajan, Raj Kd and Mary Liu. Look out for their hikes, and make sure you give them a special cheerio!

Joining the club is easy – simply navigate to the Members page on our website, follow the prompts, and behold! You are a member! Cost is \$35 per annum – peanuts! And we're always looking out for new leaders; reach out to our Walks Secretary, Doug Miers at walkssecretary@yhabush.org.au .

Upcoming Events

Our walks program has a wide variety of events that are sure to appeal to everyone. It continues to evolve. In addition to our usual selection of Saturday and Sunday walks, we have urban walks over summer and at various other times throughout the year. We run a number of accommodated trips throughout the year, and of course, we offer real bushwalking trips – pack carries where you carry everything on your back! We also have our regular club nights and social events.

The following list will be added to over the course of the next few weeks and months, so keep an eye on the club website. As always, please book through the website at <https://yhabush.org.au/activities/current-walks-program/>, and check your emails in case of last minute cancellations or changes of plan. As always, events open a week early for members.

Oct 3	Club Night – Hiking in Iceland	Club Night	Social	
Oct 7	Photography Trip, Mount Macedon	Saturday	Easy	Craig B
Oct 8	Clunes & Mount Beckworth Circuit	Sunday	Easy	Richard L
Oct 13	Refuge Cove via Telegraph Junction	Pack-carry	Med-hard	Frank P
Oct 14	Kinglake Park via Blackfish Way, Captains Creek Rd & Candlebark Track	Saturday	Med-hard	Craig B
Oct 15	Coast Walk Jan Juc to Anglesea	Sunday	Med-hard	David M
Oct 15	Altona Meadows to Williamstown Beach	Sunday	Medium	Prashant
Oct 20	The Bluff and Mt Buller NW Spur	Base-camp	Med-hard	Ken S
Oct 21	Dry Diggings Trail: Vaughan Springs to Castlemaine	Saturday	Medium	Richard L
Oct 22	Mullum Mullum Bird Watching Morning Walk	Sunday	Easy	Phina T
Oct 22	Sunbury Hills and Creeks	Sunday	Easy-med	Robert I
Oct 28	Pyrites Creek & Antimony Mine	Saturday	Hard	Claudio P
Oct 28	Grampians National Park – Mt Difficult	Pack-carry	Med-Hard	David L
Nov 3	Cup Weekend: Blue Mountains	Accomm	Med-hard	David S
Nov 3	Cup Weekend: Little Desert	Pack-carry	Medium	Craig B

Nov 5	Churchill and Lysterfield National Parks	Sunday	Medium	Gary H
Nov 11	Diggers Creek, Mt Disappointment State Forest	Saturday	Medium	Ken S
Nov 12	Cape Woolami and Churchill Island – Phillip Island	Sunday	Easy	Phina T
Nov 14	Club Night – Overland Track	Club Night	Social	
Nov 18	Pedersons Weir - Bunyip State Park	Saturday	Med-hard	Richard L
Nov 18	Mt McLeod (Mt Buffalo plateau)	Pack-carry	Medium	Stephen S
Nov 19	Woodlands Historic Park	Sunday	Easy	Doug M
Nov 25	Benalla Weekend (or Day Hike)	Self Accom	Medium	Craig B
Dec 2	Christmas Walk and Lunch	Saturday	Social	
Dec 27	Mt Hotham and Dinner Plain	Accomm	Med-hard	David S
Dec 27	Mt Howitt Plains	Base Camp/PC	Med	Craig B
Jan 6	Ada Tree Loop via VHC Track	Saturday	Medium	Bill X
Jan 12	Mitchell River Walking Track	Pack-carry	Medium	Adnan L
Jan 13	Cascade Falls, Kyeema and Dandenong Creek Loop	Saturday	Medium	Bill X
Jan 14	Eastern Dandenong Ranges Trail	Sunday	Easy-Med	Doug M
Jan 20	Falls Creek	Accomm	Various	Craig B
Jan 26	Western Plains Traverse (Bogong)	Pack-carry	Med-hard	Frank P
Feb 1	Summer in the City: Evening Walk	Thursday	Easy	Craig B
Feb 8	Summer in the City: Evening Walk	Thursday	Easy	Craig B
Feb 15	Summer in the City: Evening Walk	Thursday	Easy	Craig B

Feb 22	Summer in the City: Evening Walk	Thursday	Easy	Craig B
Feb 29	Summer in the City: Evening Walk	Thursday	Easy	Craig B
Mar 7	Summer in the City: Evening Walk	Thursday	Easy	Craig B
Mar 9	Pack Carry: The Bluff and Howqua River	Pack-carry	Medium	Craig B
Mar 28	Adelaide at Easter	Accomm	Medium	Craig B

Club Nights

Club Nights are usually held on the first Tuesday of the month. Please indicate your intention to join via the website – light refreshments are provided. Club nights are held at the East Melbourne Library Meeting Room, 122 George Street, East Melbourne. Drinks and nibbles from 7, presentation at 7.30.

Contribute to Yeti

Have you got something interesting for your fellow bushwalkers? A story of something that went wrong on a hike? A trip report? A useful map or special article? Please reach out; we'd love to hear from you. Yeti contributions can be sent to yetieditor@yhabush.org.au.

There are some publication guidelines; we really like photos and will print 4-6 for each trip report. We have the following word limits:

- Trip Reports: 300 words, 3-4 photos (one page only)
- My Favourite Hike: 500 words, 4-6 photos
- Special Features: 1000 words, 4-6 photos

Club Policies

As with all clubs, we do have a variety of policies, rules and 'ways of doing things', which are generally in place to make sure this club has a safe and welcoming environment for everyone.

Minimal Impact Guidelines

The Club supports and adheres to the principles of 'minimum impact' bushwalking:

Litter: If you carry it in, you can carry it out; this means everything, including so-called "bio-degradable" articles like apple-cores, banana peel etc.

Human waste: When available, use established toilet facilities. If a toilet is not available, dig a 15cm deep hole at least 100m from camps and watercourses, then bury waste and toilet paper.

Fires: No fires in 'fuel-stove only' areas. If you want to make a fire elsewhere, keep it small, use established fireplaces and conserve wood. And don't burn material containing foil or plastic.

Smoking Policy: If you must smoke, move a discreet distance from the group. Please ensure butts are disposed of in a closed container and carried out with you. **DO NOT SMOKE IN THE BUSH ON HIGH FIRE DANGER DAYS.**

Tracks: To help reduce erosion, keep to established tracks.

Group Size: From nearly all points of view a small party is better, but a minimum size of four is recommended. Very large groups should be split up if possible.

Do Not Disturb Wildlife: Observe, but don't interfere with any wildlife, including nests. Do not feed them; they can become very demanding if they think people will feed them, to the point of viciousness. All native flora is protected within any park or reserve, so don't pick the flowers.

Noise: Keep it down, sheesh. Do we have to remind you?

Remember the saying '*take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints*'.

Ambulance Insurance

All participants are strongly encouraged to have ambulance cover. It may be part of your private health cover but check your small print carefully. Many private health funds have significant limitations, caps or even exclusions to ambulance cover. Ambulances are not free, they are not covered by Medicare, and our leaders will not carry you out to save you the cost of an ambulance should you hurt yourself. A helicopter evacuation cost one of our members \$19,000 some years ago; but luckily, they had ambulance cover!

Ambulance cover is around \$50 a year for singles and is Australia wide.

If you don't have ambulance cover, head over to ambulance.vic.gov.au/membership today. Cancel your social plans for the next week if you must in order to afford this.

Make sure you renew your subscription each year. It's well worth it.

Change to Payment Methods for Club Events

From 1 September onwards, **all payments for events or memberships can be made only by Paypal or credit/debit card.** Payment by bank transfer or direct deposit will no longer be available.

The majority of walker payments are already occurring via Paypal or credit/debit card, so this isn't a radical change.

If you are not yet a Paypal member, then you can organise it via their website at [PayPal Australia](https://www.paypal.com/au). Or you can use the Paypal facility to pay by credit or debit card without becoming a member.

Introducing PayID

Paying drivers for car pooling and other sundries is becoming rather difficult in these cashless times, as few people carry any cash of consequence these days. Drivers may find it easier to get onto PayID . . . you can set this up through your banking app, and people can pay you their share for petrol through their mobile phones. Once you are registered for PayID, you only need to supply your mobile phone number, and people can then pay you via their banking app. It is convenient, easy and instant.

Cancellation criteria

Occasionally, we will have cause to automatically cancel a day walk for one of the following reasons:

- Fire Danger Rating of "severe", "extreme" or "code red"
- Air Quality Rating of "very poor" or "hazardous"
- Wind Speed Rating of "gale force" or greater (ie greater than 34 knots/63 km/hour)
- Temperature above 35 degrees Celsius
- Excessive rain
- Blizzards/heavy snowfalls
- Flood warnings or planned burns
- Walk route or road access is closed
- Park Rangers, other informed locals or experienced bushwalkers advise not safe to walk

- Known incidents that make the walk or the drive there unsafe (Eg. dust storm, falling trees).

The same criteria may apply to a multi-day event; if forecasts meet cancellation criteria on at least one day during the walk, then the whole event may be suspended for those days or, in certain cases, the entire event may be cancelled.

Keep an eye on your emails just in case; we may not be able to get a message out to all and sundry by any other means.

Life Members

A life membership of any recreational club is quite the achievement. YHA Bushwalking has a number of life members, some of whom are still actively involved in the club.

The life members we presently have are listed below. If you are a life member and not on the list, (or you know someone who is a life member but not on this list), then please reach out so we can correct our records and right this terrible wrong.

Bruce Meincke

Andrew Stevenson

Ken Sussex

Stephen Smith

Join the Leader Team!

We have around 65 to 70 leaders at the moment, but leaders come and go, so we're always looking for more. The joy of being a leader is you can pick hikes that interest you. Other leaders and committee members are more than happy to show you the ropes, and formal training is also provided.

Leaders enjoy a raft of other benefits too. Leaders can attend free, fully accredited first aid training, and get to attend the annual leaders lunch! It's also a great way to meet new people and develop your organising and leadership skills.

For more information on becoming a leader:

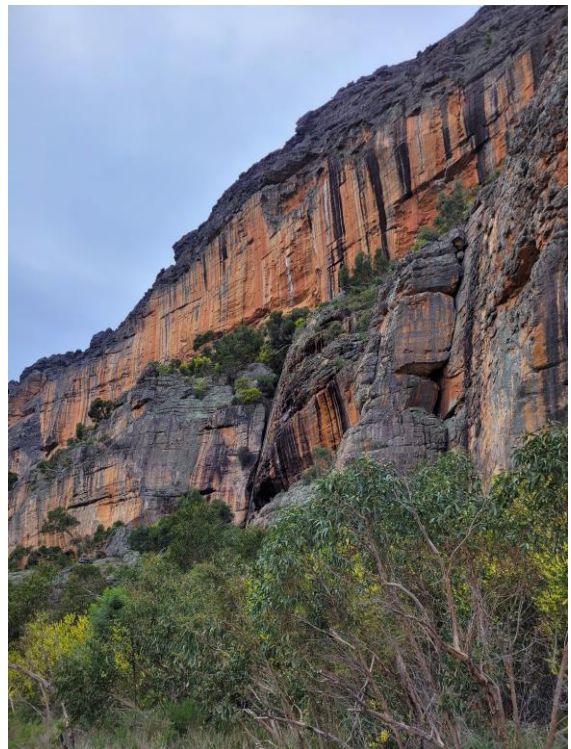
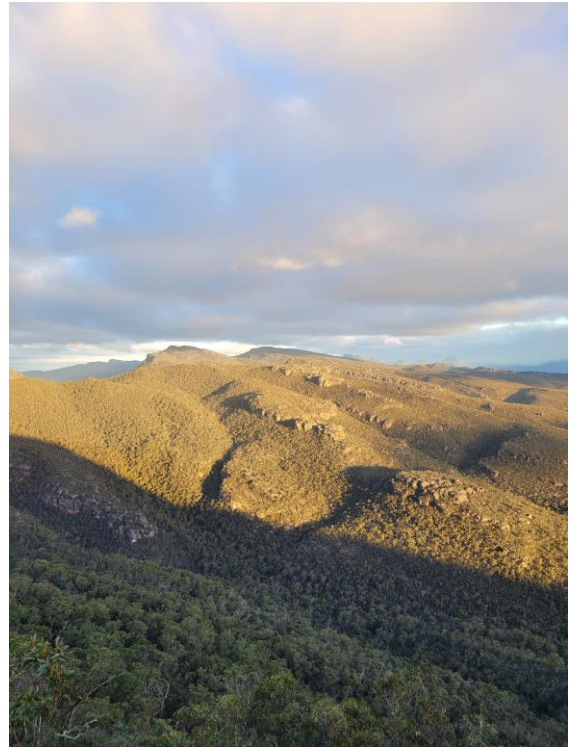
Reach out to our Walks Secretary, Doug Miers at walkssecretary@yhabush.org.au.

Trip Reports

Grampians – July 2023

Craig Beer recently organised a trip to the beautiful Grampians. Hikes on offer were to the north of the park, such as the Barigar Walk, Lake Wartook Lookout, MacKenzie Falls Loop and Boronia Peak. Fine dining at the local Indian restaurant and local pubs was also on offer

A local publication has highlighted 86 individual hikes in the Grampians; I have done a mere 15 of them. The Grampians could easily be a hiking destination for a month!



Lorne Accommodated – June 2023

David Sale recently led a trip to the beautiful Otways region. Here is a short trip report that captures the walk that were completed

A winter trip always carries an increased risk of precipitation, especially during a La Nina period. However, given that it is the only long weekend at this time of the year, there is always some interest in a trip away. As such, 16 intrepid walkers were willing face the wrath of the weather and explore the Lorne forest area for the inaugural King's birthday long weekend. While it was fine during the trip, there had been persistent wet weather earlier in the week leading to concerns regarding creek and river levels resulting in itinerary changes.

The first walk was a semi-circuit encompassing Teddy's lookout, Phantom Falls & The Canyon. One advantage of the recent wet weather was the water volume at the Falls. The Canyon is a short but picturesque walk through a steep sided gully.

The next day was another semi-circuit (with an initial steep climb) to Lower Kalimna and Sheoak Falls via the infamous Castle Rock (infamous because some people were unimpressed with descent & another ascent – something about an unfavourable cost/benefit ratio).

Around half were interested in doing the last half day walk. This was intended to start from the impressive Erskine Falls and follow the river to Lorne. However, this had to be changed (due to a track closure) to the delightful Cora Lynn Falls overlooking a tree-fern filled valley. These trips make it difficult to return to Melbourne.

Some happy snaps from the trip:



David in a particularly contemplative mood



Bass Strait continues to pound the Otway Coast, as it has done for millenia.



The Otways are full of pretty waterfalls and spectacular cool climate rainforest.

Bus Trip - With a Double Twist

In May 2023, we joined the Club President, Adnan Lovic, on a bus trip to Point Nepean National Park, at the southern tip of the Mornington Peninsula.

The Point Nepean Walk starts at the Parks entrance, going past the old Quarantine Station and World War One era military defences along coastal and bush tracks. Point Nepean offers some of the best views of the Mornington Peninsula and Port Phillip Bay Heads.

We met at St Kilda Rd, across the street from the Arts Centre at 8 am. The trip to Point Nepean took about 1.5 hours, giving everyone an opportunity to relax on a cold-ish Sunday morning.

The Point Nepean Walk itself was rather interesting, picturesque and quite enjoyable.

The Port Phillip side of the peninsula was a beautiful blue, but the Bass Strait side was heaving. The Park is also the site of one of Australia's most enduring tragedies; it was at Cheviot Beach where Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt dove into the water, saying that he 'knew this beach like the back of his hand' in 1967. It was a rough day, and the Prime Minister swam out to deeper water where he was reportedly caught in a rip and disappeared from view.

His body was never found. An outlandish conspiracy theory took hold that he was collected by a waiting Chinese submarine!



The group was in good spirits during the walk

After finishing the walk, the collective decision was to go to the Portsea Hotel nearby for well-deserved refreshments of food and drink.



The group had the rest at the local hotel

Some people even had something a little stronger, such as an icy cold beer or a civilised glass of wine.

As all things must come to an end, it was time for us to go back on the bus for our trip back home.

And that's when things started going 'slightly' off the plan. It became entirely clear to all of us very quickly that the sound of the gearbox of our bus was not healthy. In the following 20-25 minutes of our trip, that noise became progressively worse and finally our little bus gave up and broke down.



Some "long faces" in the group...

At that point, priority was to ensure that everyone is safe and off the road. Our bus driver advised us that the replacement bus

would be arriving in 1 to 1.5 hours to pick us up. The prospect of standing by a busy highway as night fell in the middle of winter was not an attractive prospect!

But fate intervened, when our Yeti editor and phone maps aficionado Craig, who was a part of the group, suddenly realised that we were a mere 20-minute walk from the local Rosebud RSL Club. And it was almost dinner time!!

So, long- story- short & fast forward 25 minutes, we were all ordering drinks and dinner at the Rosebud RSL. Special thanks to their staff for bending their rules and letting us in without valid membership!

Their internal communication was "More of these bushwalkers from a broken-down bus are coming in..."



No complaints about RSL chicken parma...

Interestingly, food and drinks further lifted the spirits of the entire group. The replacement bus rocked up in front of the RSL almost at the same time when we were finishing the dinner. The bus trip was a golden chance for some to snooze, before we arrived to Melbourne about 2 hours later than planned.

However, everyone seemed to be totally happy with the trip extension and unexpected Sunday evening dinner.

Meet the animals of the bush!

The wallaby

There are different types of wallabies; you may have heard of brush wallabies, rock wallabies, nail-tail wallabies (which have a horny spur at the tip of their tail), pademelons and swamp wallabies.

Wallabies tend to be smaller than their kangaroo cousins, with longer tails, darker fur and a much more thickset body. They live in hillier country deep in forests, as opposed to kangaroos, who tend to prefer more open spaces. Wallabies also tend to live a more solitary life than a roo.

Like kangaroos, wallabies have a pouch, with a joey being born after a very short gestation. The joey then makes its way to the pouch, where it continues to grow. They can live for up to 15 years.

Native to Australia and New Guinea, they are one of Australia's more rare exports; there are introduced populations in New Zealand, Hawaii, British Isles and France.

Their tails are apparently particularly tasty in wallaby stew.



The bunyip

Bunyips lurk in swamps, billabongs, creeks, riverbeds and waterholes in various places around Australia. Bunyips possibly eat other fish and passing animals, although they have a taste for women and children.

The creature is supposedly a miserable, smelly thing with a long neck, a round head and a body like a manatee, which makes roaring noises just as it is about to eat.

Serious sightings of bunyips were noted in the early to mid-1800s, but it appears there is a direct correlation between seeing a bunyip and how much you have had to drink.

The stories of bunyips have descended from Aboriginal folklore; mothers possibly warning small children about bunyips to keep youngsters away from waterways.

Source: <https://allthatsinteresting.com/bunyip>



Plant life of the bush

Gympie Gympie

One of the world's most venomous plants, the gympie-gympie resides right here in Australia. An absolute bastard, this plant looks like it has nice, soft velvety leaves, but touching them feels 'like being burned with hot acid and electrocuted at the same time'. Others say there is 'nothing to rival the pain; it's ten times worse than anything else'. People who are stung may fall into anaphylactic shock, and it can take years for the scars to go away.

What causes all this? The hairs in the leaves carry a neurotoxin that damages your nervous system.

Although the plant is prevalent in rainforests from Cape York to northern New South Wales, we include it here because it is a dangerous plant, and people hike all over the place. If you see it, do not touch it. If you touch it, seek medical attention as soon as possible – call an ambulance if you have to.

A story of a person using this plant as toilet paper has never been verified.



<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/science-environment/2009/06/gympie-gympie-once-stung-never-forgotten/>

<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/science-environment/2012/07/australias-most-poisonous-plants/>

Spotted Red Toadstool

The *Amanita Muscaria* is a piece of fungi that seems to come straight out of old English folklore. This spectacular, if rather common toadstool is, however, an introduced poisonous fungus. These are actually spreading their reach around the country but are usually associated with pine and birch plantations.

This particular fungi is actually found all around the world. It can grow surprisingly big.

Should you decide to pick and eat it, expect a 'psychoactive reaction'; in other words, they give induce some pretty major hallucinations.



The poison breaks down after boiling to such an extent that the fungi is eaten in some parts of Asia, Europe and North America, probably for its side effects. However, I did not extend my research to trying this out for myself, and you are smart enough to know not to try it either.

Source: australianfungi.blogspot.com

Golden Wattle

You will see lots golden wattle in spring time on your hikes around Victoria! A native to south eastern Australia, it grows in the forest, generally understorey of eucalypt forests. Its beautiful golden flower and green leaves lend themselves to the national colours of Australian sporting teams of green and gold.

However, the plant is not seen as beautiful by all; it has spread throughout its natural range in south eastern Australia to the point that it is considered a weed in some parts of Tasmania, and has gained a foothold in other countries, such as South Africa, Tanzania, Italy, Portugal, India, Indonesia, New Zealand and California.

The tree can grow to eight metres in height, and attracts a multitude of birds. This is the tree's own self interest – it cannot set seed without birds foraging and dislodging pollen.

The bark produces tannin which can be harvested for commercial uses. However, you won't find old-growth golden wattles – they only live for 15-30 years.



Source: Wikipedia

My favourite hike

Elizabeth Jarman is one of our most regular hikers, and as far as she is concerned, the tougher the better! A recent sojourn to Alice Springs to complete the famed Larapinta Trail led to an amazing experience which she shares here.

Larapinta Trail, Northern Territory

I was lucky enough to complete the Larapinta Trail in June 2023, a 223 kilometre long walking trail that begins near Alice Springs at Telegraph Station winding its way to Mount Sonder, along the West MacDonnell, Heavitree and Chewing Ranges, and covering several peaks – Mt Giles, Mt Sonder, Brinkley Bluff and Paisley Bluff.

The walk is suggested as a 16 day walk, and my group of 2 took 14 days, having planned for 15, which still allowed for several half days when the morning's walk was shorter.

Some walk through in a week, some take 20 days, the trail runners a few days, and there are paid tour group that do a 'highlights of the Larapinta Trail' with the clients only carrying day packs, for 6 days. There are also options to get on and off the trailheads and drive further ahead to do more sections yourself if you have your own transport.



Some walk from east to west (Alice to Sonder (Redbank Gorge campsite) or West to East finishing near Alice Springs. Some feel the views going outwards from Alice Springs are better and others like the afternoon sun behind them coming the other way.

If you have your own transport you can do your own food drops – Standley Chasm, Serpentine Gorge and Ormiston Gorge, or pay a transport company to do it, where the food, which has been

organized into boxes for the number of days needed ahead, are left with your name on them. The companies will leave them ahead for you for around \$60 a bin, which are provided, and a further \$60 to pick them up again and leave them at your hotel if you have things you want to keep such as battery packs, excess clothing etc.

It is a winter walk, when the temperatures are chilly at night, down to zero, and mild in the day, low 20s. The air is very dry and a mild day can feel hotter due to the dry air.

There are water tanks at the campsites, and roadheads, and walkers are encouraged to carry up to 6 litres of water a day to ensure safety, especially if camping away from the official campsites.

There are many spots along the way one can camp apart from the shelters – we camped in sandy riverbeds several times which were fabulous – the sand was warm from the day's sun and soft under our mats which kept us warm and comfortable.

The shelters have sleeping platforms which can take about 10 people which is easy if it rains or sites are full, toilets with toilet paper and water tanks.



One night we camped on Mt Giles and had both a beautiful sunset and sunrise, along with a rainbow. Very hard ground up there for pegging tents and for toilet holes though.

Although rated hard, we never staggered in to camp exhausted as we paced ourselves, and the longest days were also the easier terrain at the beginning.

We met many other walkers along the way – singles going in either direction, couples, a family, a school group -fortunately well behaved – and mostly from the southern states catching some warmth.

I highly recommend this spectacular walk with its variety of hills, gorges, sandy river beds and red earth tracks.



Would you like to volunteer for the environment?

Bush Search and Rescue Victoria

Bush Search and Rescue Victoria (BSAR) is a dedicated volunteer search and rescue service. The group participates in land-based search and rescue for persons lost in bush and alpine areas under the direction of the Victoria Police. Members include experienced bushwalkers, backcountry and cross-country skiers and mountaineers who have had specialist search and rescue training. They are capable of operating independently in the field for several days.

BSAR is open to members of Bushwalking Victoria clubs and Bushwalking Victoria Individual Members who meet the experience and age entry requirements listed below. The entry requirements basically ensure that members are competent and experienced bushwalkers, ready to receive specific training in search and rescue techniques.

As a prospective member you need to:

- be an experienced overnight bushwalker or ski tourer
- have successfully completed an extended walk of at least four days or more
- have had snow walking or snow camping experience
- be a competent off-track navigator
- be fully equipped for overnight walking
- be sufficiently fit for prolonged heavy scrub bashing in difficult terrain
- be at least 18 years of age

If you are interested in becoming involved, please head to [BSAR.org](https://bsar.org) and make your own enquiries.

Bush Tracks and Conservation

Bushwalking Tracks and Conservation (BTAC) is a volunteer organisation which has a specific focus on tracks and trails strategies, exploring opportunities for new or upgrading tracks, and undertaking fieldwork in Victoria's national parks and state forest.

BTAC Volunteers carry out hands-on work on tracks and conservation projects. Their projects are conducted auspices of relevant land managers such as Parks Victoria in national and state parks or the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action in state forests.

Works traditionally include clearing fallen trees and vegetation from existing walking tracks, building or repairing boardwalks, installing or replacing track markers and signage, and identifying and removing noxious weeds.

BTAC ventures to some remote and spectacular parts of the state, sometimes staying out in the field for a few days. If you have time on your hands and this interests you, then you may wish to register on the Parks Victoria Volunteer portal and join the Bushwalking Victoria group.

Hiking Products Reviewed

When I started overnight hiking, it took considerable time to build up a sensible source of equipment, including a few mistakes. For example, my first tent (at \$40) was surprising robust but very large and heavy. My first sleeping mat (at \$2) was an incredibly durable (and bloody uncomfortable) yoga mat that I rolled out at the end of a tough day for a tough night. My first back pack was utterly destroyed in the endless rain of a five day sojourn along the Overland Track in Tasmania. My first batch of maps proved utterly useless when hiking but great for four-wheel driving.

Toilet Paper

RECOMMENDED



Your own supply of toilet paper comes in handy. Sand and water, or a stick may not particularly serve the purpose you have in mind, particularly if you are undertaking one of those bigger jobs.

People become extremely precious of their bloody toilet paper, particularly on a long hike. And who wants to be caught short? Bring your own!

(However, I do sell my toilet paper at \$5 a sheet - it's a very profitable enterprise).

Scarpa Boots

RECOMMENDED



Many of our members swear by Scarpa hiking boots. Still made in Northern Italy, these boots are not cheap, but they do the job and then some.

But don't be a cheapskate – buy them from a bricks and mortar store, as good footwear is only any good if it fits properly.

Aquatabs

RECOMMENDED



A set of aquatabs is a useful addition to your hiking kit if you are doing overnight hikes. Simply drop a tablet into a litre of water, and within half an hour, the creepy crawlies residing in that water will be dealt with, generally allowing you to drink the water safely.

The tablets release chlorine into the water and will make your water supply drinkable for up to 24 hours. However, the taste of chlorine is definitely noticeable. Some people merely ignore it, others add powdered flavour to mask the taste. And at around \$12 a pack, they are cheap for what they do!

Bush First Aid

Now, naturally, you are smart enough to know that this magazine does not offer medical advice. However, bush first aid is something we take seriously, so we offer some tips that you may or not find useful. But you know your body, and you also know that any queries you have about the following should be followed up privately.

Antihistamines



Your body can become sensitive to things around you, such as foods, plants, animals and medicines. If you are allergic to something, it is called an allergen.

When the body is exposed to allergens it releases histamine, a chemical that is an important part of your body's immune response. Histamine makes you sneeze, makes your nose run, and makes your eyes and skin itch, become red and swell up. In a way, it is trying to get you to sneeze out or scratch away the allergen.

Antihistamines are medicines that act by blocking the body's response to histamine in different parts of the body. This reduces the severity of the reaction and eases the symptoms of allergy.

Antihistamines are commonly used to treat a number of conditions, such as hay fever, hives, asthma and *reactions to bites and stings*. Hence, why we recommend you include a pack of antihistamines in your first aid kit, such as Telfast or Claratyne; easy to get from any supermarket or chemist.

Source: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/antihistamines>

Broken Leg/sprained ankle.

A broken leg can happen to anyone. A YHA Bushwalking event in Wilson's Promontory some six years ago resulted in a helicopter evacuation when a hiker slipped on wombat poo and broke her leg just above the ankle. Another hike in the Cathedral Ranges some eight years ago resulted in a helicopter evacuation when a hiker rolled her ankle so badly she simply could not walk.

Accordingly, there is not much we can do other than call in the emergency services and make it their problem. Depending on the circumstances, they may, or may not, send a helicopter. However, bad weather may prevent helicopter flights, or one may simply not be available.

In the case of a broken leg, first aiders would normally rest and reassure the casualty, and try to immobilise the fracture as best they can. It is generally unwise to try and move the casualty. This could cause more problems than you already have! So sit tight, and keep them as comfortable as you can. You may need to move them away from ant nests or to some shade or similar; but generally, stay where you are. Once the alarm is raised, the emergency services will be despatched very quickly, and they are extremely helpful with a vast array of resources.

You can try and splint the leg or apply a compression bandage or similar, and let the ambulance people take it a step further when they arrive. You are simply trying to secure the injury. It may or may not be wise to remove their footwear; you could end up with footwear to look after; their foot may suffer extreme cold and it may be even more difficult for them to hobble along if required.



<https://www.coloradomn.org/blog/splinting-review/>

In the case of a sprained ankle, you may be able to remove footwear, wrap the ankle in a self-made compression bandage, reinsert the foot into footwear and potentially hobble out. More options are available with a sprain; it may recover rapidly to an almost workable position after a short while.



There is little point in trying to build a stretcher out of nearby tree branches like you may have learned in boy scouts or girl guides, it simply won't hold and it is unlikely you'll have the necessary tools or knowledge to achieve this in a realistic time frame anyway.

If you are out of range of an emergency call on a mobile, then it could be a PLB situation – it could become life threatening if sub-zero temperatures are on their way. Likely, you'll despatch some members of the team back to the cars to call an ambulance and expect a long wait. You may even be out there overnight.

Ambulance Victoria also employs Wilderness Response Paramedics who are specifically trained to assist in emergencies in remote and wilderness areas of Victoria. They provide specialist response to remote locations in alpine and bush areas alongside other agencies such as police, SES, CFA and others.

Special Features

Vebica Evans has been walking with YHA Bushwalking on and off for almost 15 years! She is also one of our newest leaders. Apart from bushwalking, she enjoys trail running, taking her dog on adventures, and most outdoor activities and would love to meet you on a hike one day . . . but not everything goes right for our leaders, as the following story tells . . .

Embracing the Unforeseen on a Lake Mountain Snow Walk

When life throws unexpected twists at us, the true spirit of adventure emerges, with its sense of bringing us into the present moment, and igniting a spark of curiosity.

I love snowy landscapes. They stir within me feelings of joy, of stillness and of being in a magical fairyland. I was eager to share the wonder of the snow with others. Little did I know, that the day's intended plan was about to take an unexpected twist.

With a cruel yet necessary rendezvous time of 7.30am, our snow walkers met at Beechworth Bakery Healesville. Early, in order to beat the avalanche of families, determined to go to the snow on the final day of the school holidays.

With a mix of anticipation tinged with sheepish trepidation, I gathered the group. The night prior, an unsettling email from Lake Mountain had the potential to challenge our snow-filled dreams. Declaring the closure of the cross-country trails. It was now my daunting task to deliver this disheartening news to the eager walkers. Though I was determined that whatever today would bring, there would be an encounter with snow.

We journeyed to the picturesque town of Marysville, where originally we were going to hire our snow shoes. The ski shop dishearteningly confirmed, that the cross-country trails were indeed closed, their fate sealed by the wrath of howling winds.

However, a glimmer of hope emerged from an information board's message: The "Summit trail" is open. With a mix of hope, and a lingering concern that our 'snow walk' might transform into an unexpected, 'YHA bushwalkers take on the toboggan park', we ascended the road to Lake Mountain.

As we drove, the gradual unveiling of snow adorned trees, filled the cars with a chorus of delighted exclamations. A reminder to me that no matter what the day held, that just being in snowy landscape is a beautiful experience itself.

We arrived at Lake Mountain village to a thick mist and strong wind, the snowgum tops thrashed, like revellers in a heavy metal mosh pit. The main sign at the entrance taunted us with its confusing proclamation of 'Trails open'. I sought confirmation once again, and alas, the cross-country trails we had set our sights upon remained shut, casualties of the unforgiving high winds.

Our original walk plans crumbled, we found ourselves embracing a replacement scheme—a medley of exploration and improvisation. Yet, a flicker of concern began to kindle within me. Would I be reduced to leading a lackluster tour, showcasing mundane landmarks like the humble toilet block and the toddler-ridden toboggan area? However, a glimmer of hope beckoned us forth—Summit Trail.

Approaching the starting point of Summit trail (a short 700m trail), a fluorescent coated official called, "Hey, you can't walk that trail, it's closed!". Shattering our hopes like fragile ice crystals. The aftermath of past bushfires had weakened the snowgums, and they were susceptible to falling in the relentless winds. We regrouped to consider what to do.

One of our group offered the glimmer of an alternative, 'further down the hill at a lower car park, there is a trail to a hut I once went to'. Now usually I might have dismissed this idea, but this random walker was the club president. Granting him the benefit of the doubt, with our Summit plan seemingly dashed, we went to find 'Adnan's trail'.

And so, our determined group of nine walked began single file down the road. At this point it felt like word had spread like wildfire, that the audacious bushwalkers were on the descent. As if on cue, a minibus pulled up beside us, 'I've been told to give you a lift for your safety'. In that moment, we transformed into a gang of renegade adventurers. Embracing the unexpected boon, we boarded our personal minibus, whisking us away on a swift journey of 2 kilometers to the lower Snowy Hill car park. Now away from the summit, the wind had faded into insignificance. We set out in search of the elusive President' track, our excitement blooming, we treaded a mere 10 metres along the path, to be met by a gate with a stark warning sign, "Closed for tree maintenance – no walkers".

Our plans dashed once again, it felt that our dreams of a snow walk might morph into mundane circles around car parks and toilet blocks, but our luck was about to change.

A hidden gem materised – an enchanting memorial boardwalk, cloaked in snow. Spirits raised, we consulted AllTrails, unveiling mountain bike trails off the carpark (a section of the Cascade's Trail).

And there we found the start of the trail, and a sign. Fear gripped me, not another sign. I was filled with delight to find the sign read "No Tobogganing" – a humorous assurance that our snow walk dreams were within reach.

We decided to walk this track for as long as the wind conditions were favourable. This trail was a beautiful, narrow walking trail. It was like fairy-land, with snow on the trees, and as the snow patted down, it was lovely to see the looks of delight on people's faces.

The walk on mountain bike trail was in many ways more picturesque than the original planned cross-country trail walk.

Once it was time to start back on the 2km walk to the Village, for safety I walked up to a large parked coach bus, and said, 'Can you please walkie talkie someone to let them know the bushwalkers are going to begin walking up the road?'. The bus driver answered with, 'I'll drive you all, it will be safer'. So for the second time that day, we were spoilt with a chauffeur driven adventure between the carparks!

As the coach drove up the road, the group could see why we had arrived so early. Now there were herds of cars teeming with families. As we drove down the mountain we saw queues of cars almost all the way back to Marysville.

As we departed our snowy wonderland, we could muse, that sometimes it is the unexpected detours in life that gift us with extraordinary adventures.



