

The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Incorporated
Blue Mountains Crossing

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Scripture Union "Bushies" have now walked across the Blue Mountains twice, once via a series of day walks and later in a series of three overnight and two day walks.

The latter perhaps involved more uninterrupted bushland and maybe more on that in the future. For now, here are some thoughts on one possibility for day walkers to consider for crossing the Mountains.

This is not a walk guide, so you would need to obtain appropriate maps, make enquiries, be suitably equipped and experienced and "tread lightly" in a group, preferably with a club.

While you take responsibility for any such walk you do, our club would be pleased to hear from you if you are interested in doing this or a similar traverse.

1. Lapstone to Glenbrook via Glenbrook Gorge

Starting from Lapstone Station you can take the unconstructed track along the Nepean River to Glenbrook Creek and rock hop along Glenbrook Gorge.

On a hot day, you could enjoy a swim at Jellybean Pool or Blue Pool. This one is not a rainy weather walk.

The Lapstone Zig Zag is the route of a former section of railway line.

Visit historic Knapsack Gully Viaduct (built 1864), Lennox Bridge (built in 1833 and used until 1970) and enjoy fine view of Cumberland Plain from Elizabeth Lookout.

Later you pass Glenbrook Lagoon, which I understand was seen by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth on 12 May 1813.

There is some suburban walking to finish the day.

2. Blaxland To Woodford Via St Helena Ridge

This is a leg-stretcher and for experienced walkers only.

After taking the track from the southern end of Ross St to Glenbrook Creek, we followed the "Bull Ant Track" up to and along the ridge on the northern side of St Helena Gully (you might meet the Bull Ant Runners, a local running club).

On reaching Bunyan fire trail we turned south then took St Helena and Oaks fire trails to Woodford.

I've yet to see the "Bull Ant Track" on any map, so if you don't know anyone who is familiar with the track, consider walking from Glenbrook to Woodford instead (especially leg stretching!).

That route is via Duck Hole track, Duck Hole link to St Helena Ridge then St Helena and Oaks Fire trails.

Keep and eye and ear out for mountain-bike riders.

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3. Woodford - Hazelbrook via waterfalls of North Hazelbrook

Have some fun guessing the height of the many waterfalls you will encounter along the way.

This walk includes the 'Transit of Venus' Track, Three Waterfalls Track (Mabel, Edith and Fairy Falls) and later the fairly eroded track from Winbourne Ave to Burgess Falls, Horseshoe Falls and Lyre Bird Glen Falls.

We connected the two sections by following the powerlines between Clearview Pde and Winbourne Ave.

Some local people indicated this was OK.

There is a dogleg in the track on the Winbourne Ave side so be careful not to end up in someone's back yard.

To be sure, you could perhaps check with the council regarding land ownership under the powerlines at that road.

4. Hazelbrook-Lawson via waterfalls of Sth Hazelbrook & Sth Lawson

Many people are familiar with the waterfalls of South Lawson, but have you visited Bedford Pool, Terrace Falls and Victor Falls south of Hazelbrook.

The track could do with a bit of a tidy-up and signposting at track heads, but this is a refreshing walk at any time of the year.

In late winter/early spring, maybe check first whether any control burning is scheduled.

5. Lawson - Wentworth Falls inc section of Bruce's Walk

Another one for experienced walkers. We started on the fire trail that runs west from the northern end of the picnic area accessed from St Bernards Drive. After a few hundred metres on the fire trail a track leads steeply downhill to the creek that runs through Walkers Glen.

The track crosses the creek and ascends, initially steeply, to another fire trail.

It's not hard to get from there to Kent St although I think some sections of the fire trail in this vicinity run through private property.

A formalised route through Lanasa Park from North Lawson Park to Kent St (avoiding private property) would help.

The section of Bruce's Walk from Kent St to Frenchman's Rd is well mapped in Jim Smith's "How to See the Blue Mountains" (2nd ed.) and is marked with white tags on trees.

However, the track is narrow, unmaintained and features umteen zig zags and more than the occasional fallen tree.

After the section of Bruce's Walk we headed along Railway Pde, but did the side trip to Water Nymphs Dell – an underrated gem in my view featuring a cool mossy amphitheatre with a couple of delightful waterfalls.

6. Wentworth Falls To Leura

This is getting into "bushwalking traffic" but what views (eg Jamison Valley, Kings Tableland).

We followed Darwin's Walk (he was there in 1836), the Undercliff/Overcliff Track and later stopped for a break and a drink at the "Conservation Hut" off the western end of Fletcher St.

Next came the track across Lillian's Bridge, the new section of the Grand Cliff Top Walk behind the Fairmont Resort and, after a little road walking, the tracks to the Pool of Siloam and from there to Lyre Bird Dell.

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7. Leura (Lyrebird Dell track head)-Echo Point

Even more "traffic" here but Katoomba is rightly a place of national and international renown. The excellently restored section of track from the cliff tops down to Leura Forest is a credit to NPWS. You might want to walk along Federal Pass to the junction with Dardanelles Pass then double back to ascend the Giant Stairway past the Three Sisters to Echo Point. If the thought of possible crowds is a bit much, and your group consists of experienced walkers, consider walking down Roberts Pass (Leura) and along Lindeman Pass to join up with Federal Pass. You need to watch your footing and the spider webs but this is a beautiful walk with lush vegetation and memorable cliff and valley views.

8. Echo Point to Explorers tree

This presents an option for more fine cliff top walking, taking in part of the Prince Henry Walk, Katoomba Falls Reserve, the grounds of the scenic railway, Cahill's Lookout and the track from the western end of Stuarts Rd to Nellies Glen Rd. The last of these tracks is very well located and constructed and offers scenic opportunities ranging from valley views to ferny gullies. As it is a constructed track, I'm surprised not to have found it on a map yet. If you don't want to stay on the ridge, fit and experienced walkers could venture down the Devil's Hole Track and proceed to Explorers Tree via Nellies Glen. This is strenuous but rewarding. It also includes part of the famous Six Foot Track.

9. Explorers Tree to Medlow Bath

The private property between Pulpit Hill Rd and Delmonte Rd, Medlow Bath presents a problem. We found a "walkers only" sign at the end of Pulpit Hill Rd but there is only an "out and back" walk via a series of unmapped fire trails and tracks. We eventually reached a rock cairn where the track ended. If you walk along the side of the highway from Pulpit Hill, keeping any guardrail between you and the traffic, you will eventually get to Medlow Bath, although it is not particularly pleasant going. At Medlow Bath things improve. From Bellevue Cres you can walk down to Three Brothers Rocks, then along the old Glen Rosa Track (not entirely easy to follow), past the Colosseum and around the recently re-cleared cliff top track to the "Sunbath". You finish at the Hydro Majestic. Tell the staff there before you start this walk as it goes across the Hydro's land. An alternative is to walk from Echo Point to North Katoomba and join up with Bruce's Walk to take you to Katoomba Airstrip. If you take this option, which is suitable for experienced walkers, you could check out the Hydro Majestic tracks on another day.

10. Medlow Bath Blackheath via Evans Lookout & Govetts Leap

Few bushwalkers would need to be told there are majestic views of the Grose Valley on offer between Evans Lookout and Govetts Leap. Our walk had the added advantage of getting us from the vicinity of Katoomba Airstrip down to the Grand Canyon via the "Old Point Pilcher" track retailer Mark Foy had cut in 1907. This old constructed track appears in good shape considering the passing of the years. There is a bit of a rock ledge then a short steep section just before you reach the floor of the canyon. We visited the NPWS' Centre at Govetts Leap finished the day by travelling along Popes Glen Track. This walk is fantastic on a fine sunny day in Spring.

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11. Blackheath to Mt Victoria via Kanimbla Escarpment (including Mt Boyce)

Add views of the Kanimbla Valley to those already enjoyed of the Grose.

Mt Boyce is a favourite with rock climbers and this has resulted in a couple of tracks off the railway access road.

A fairly large area of land along the cliff tops is now in public ownership. Jim Smith's book "How to See the Blue Mountains" is a help with this one.

When we reached a point below "Conical Rock" we scrambled up from the footpad to the rock so as to avoid the western continuation of the cliff top pad which went much too close to the edge for my liking.

From Conical Rock we took another footpad (that is well away from the cliffs) west a short distance to a formed walking track that runs straight back up to the railway access road.

A side trip to Fairy Bower or Cox's Cave and then Mt Piddington and One Tree Hill (1,111m above sea level and the highest point in Blue Mountains LGA) is a good way to end this walk.

The township of Mt Victoria was once called One Tree Hill.

12. Hartley Vale to Lithgow

Are We There Yet? Well yes, actually.

From Hartley Vale you will need a car shuffle or strong legs for a return to Mt Victoria.

However, a final day walk from Hartley Vale to Lithgow was fun for us, even though walking along the side of The Gap Rd was a bit dicey.

You could avoid this by using a car shuffle and finishing your trip by walking from the top of Hassans Walls (where there are some great views of Hartley Valley) to Lithgow via Bracey Lookout.

You can now get down the hill to the town via a set of steps that run from the water reservoir below the lookout to Bridge St.

13. Mount Victoria to Hartley Vale

The tracks in this area would be pretty well known to many club bushwalkers.

The Department of Land and Water Conservation will be able to provide you with information.

We walked along Berghofers Rd and visited Berghofers Pass, which was in use for a time until cars were powerful enough to negotiate Victoria Pass.

Mt York provides you with plenty of history to think about as does Cox's Road down into the Valley.

Lockyer's Road/Track and Lawsons Long Alley are alternative routes to the valley, further to the east.

There is a camping area at Hartley Vale at the end of Lockyer's track.

There is certainly more than one way to walk across the Blue Mountains, but maybe these ideas from our club will whet your appetite.

It was a bit of a challenge, scenically excellent and of considerable educational value.

Hope some of you may "have a look"!

Some References:

- Neil Paton "Treks in New South Wales"
- Robert Sloss "Bushwalking,
- Cycling – Jogging in the Lower Blue Mountains"
- Jim Smith "How to See the Blue Mountains" (2nd ed.)
- Tyrone T Thomas "100 Walks in New South Wales" (4th ed.)