BUSHWALKS OF MOUNTAIN LAGOON
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MOUNTAIN LAGOON

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:

William Wordsworth

This booklet has been prepared by Mill Paddock Cottage B&B

www.millpaddock.com.au
A Cautionary word ...

The booklet is intended for your general information only and is NOT a definitive walking guide. While some of the walks listed here are readily accessible to casual rambling, others are only suitable for experienced bushwalkers and require appropriate, adequate preparation. The Wollemi National Park is a vast, uninhabited wilderness area of dense bushland, rugged terrain and deep canyons with difficult access. It is not a place to be spending a night unprepared, regardless of the season. For all the walks, sensible footwear and clothing are recommended, as well as hats, sunscreen, insect repellent and a water bottle. A few moments’ preparation before setting out for the day will help to ensure that you have a safe and enjoyable walk.
Mountain Lagoon

Fourteen kilometres off The Bells Line of Road from Bilpin, the village of Mountain Lagoon is scarcely large enough to make a dot on the map; some twenty properties scattered along the ridge beside Mountain Lagoon Road and another twenty or so around the lagoon itself comprise the entire settlement. There are no public buildings other than the NSW Rural Fire Brigade Shed, no shops, no post office, no petrol station – but what the village lacks in services, it more than makes up for in the beauty of its surroundings.

Mountain Lagoon

The lagoon, some 12 acres in area, is situated along the Kurrajong Fault Line, which runs through Mountain Lagoon. Drilling by Geoscience Australia in 2008 confirmed that the fault line crosses the south-eastern corner of Mountain Lagoon, closely following the road line of the lower end of Sams Way. It also identified evidence of a bedrock uplift of some 20 metres, similar to that found in the Wheeney Creek area, in land to the east of the road. Water levels in the lagoon rise and fall in conjunction with the level of the water table and at the time of publication, after several excessively wet years, the lagoon is full to over-
flowing, with extensive reed beds and a varied bird life. During the long drought years that preceded this latest wet spell, the water disappeared completely, but for the most part, somewhere between these two extremes is the norm.

Tucked into the very bottom of the vast Wollemi National Park, European settlement in Mountain Lagoon predates the establishment of the national park in December 1979 by over 100 years. The original land grants in the area were offered in 1868. Prior to that date early settlers came here to log the forests, attracted by the giant eucalyptus trees. A second generation of great trees has been allowed to re-establish since the decline of the logging industry and in the cleared paddocks near the lagoon, as well as these giant trees, you can also see the 2m high stumps of trees hand-logged a century and more ago, the notches into which the loggers wedged the planks they stood on still clearly visible. A number of saw mills were established in the area during the 1830s and 1840s; one was located where the modern day Mill Paddock Cottage and garden now stands. Logging continued in the area in a small way up until the 1930s. After the logging came land clearing and farming; the rich soil attracted orchardists and a number of orchards were established in the area. Few of these orchards remain today as commercial enterprises, but those that do produce high quality apples, plums, peaches, figs, raspberries and blueberries.

There are a number of walks to be taken around the Mountain Lagoon area. The first six on the list are suitable for all ages with good general fitness levels; the last two are longer, considerably more demanding and should only be attempted by experienced walkers with appropriate walking gear.
Mountain Lagoon’s “magnificent trees”
The Walks

Sams Way
(The Lagoon Loop)

More in the nature of a gentle country ramble than a serious bushwalk, a stroll around the Sams Way Loop is a lovely one in any season. Named after Sam Boughton, one of the area’s original residents, Sams Way branches off Mountain Lagoon Road just beyond Dutch’s Nursery, skirting the lagoon on its eastern side and rejoining the main road just before it becomes a fire trail. The lagoon loop is approximately 3.2km.

You can walk the loop in either direction; a left turn into Sams Way just beyond the nursery provides a gentle downhill walk to where the lagoon meets the road and a sharp climb back up the hill on the other side.

Those of a less energetic inclination should continue along Mountain Lagoon Road, down the steep hill to the second entrance to Sams Way and follow this road back up to the junction near the nursery.

The spectacular 3km long avenue of trees on Sams Way was planted some sixty years ago by Sam Boughton and his son Buck, using a variety of alternating deciduous trees and conifers to line each side of the road. Sam died in 1961 and never saw the trees reach their magnificent maturity, but he and his son were truly men of vision and their legacy remains today for all to enjoy, as the seasons change throughout the year. There is brilliant new lime green foliage in spring, dense, cool shade where the trees form a complete canopy over Sams Way in summer and a magnificent display of red and gold and purple in autumn. Even the stark, bare branches etched against a pale blue winter sky have a special beauty.
On your walk around the lagoon, look out for –

- Sam’s monument, approximately 100m down from the first entrance to Sams Way on the left.
- If you are walking in spring, the beautiful azalea hedge, planted at the same time as the trees, along the old farmhouse boundary.
- Some huge eucalyptus deanii beside the road as you go down (or up) the steep hill.
- Little Lagoon, where the lagoon comes close to the road, and beyond the paddocks between Little Lagoon and the original Boughton farmhouse, Cooramill, extensive views across the water.
- The stump of a hand-logged tree in the big paddock beside the lagoon.
- Wood ducks and swamphens on the lagoon, and occasionally a grey heron.
- Eastern and crimson rosellas all through the year, white tailed black cockatoos in summer and gang-gang cockatoos from late summer through till winter, as they feed on the seeds of the Liquid Amber trees.
- Female satin bower birds (and if you are especially lucky, a male one, too), lots of little birds in the shrubbery along the roadside - fairy wrens, yellow breasted robins, red backed finches, silver eyes, grey and occasionally rufous fantails, as well as all the usual suspects such as kookaburras, plovers, noisy minors and bell minors, a wide variety of honey eaters, magpies, butcher birds and currawongs.
- Early morning and late afternoon walkers might be lucky enough to spot the occasional wallaby down for a drink and there could even be a prize for the person who actually manages to photograph the resident wombat who lives across from Little Lagoon! Look very closely and you might spot a koala or two in one of the smooth-barked eucalypts growing in the lagoon paddock.
Changing seasons on Sams way
Tootie Creek Track

By the channels of coolness the echoes are calling,
And down the dim gorges I hear the creek falling;
It lives in the mountain where moss and the sedges
Touch with their beauty the banks and the ledges.
Through breaks of the cedar and sycamore bowers
Struggles the light that is love to the flowers;
And softer than slumber, and sweeter than singing,
The notes of the bell-birds are running and ringing

Henry Kendall

The Tootie Creek track begins just 50m beyond the end of the bitumen road, along the western boundary of the first property on the left. The track follows the fence line around behind this property, before heading off into the bush in a northerly direction. It then leaves the ridge and descends along the side of a fairly steep gully where there are some splendid, large grey gums growing. Watch out for koalas here; in this area the grey gum is the koala’s preferred food.

Beyond the gully the track passes through a cutting of rare pink shale and shortly afterwards, is crossed by a wet creek (2.1km from Mountain Lagoon Road) lined by many tall, straight blue gum and grey myrtle trees. It then enters a small rainforest where sassafras, coachwood, tree ferns and soft bracken abound, before reaching a beautiful open section of Tootie Creek (3.6km from Mountain Lagoon Road).
The summer walker will be tempted to strip down and plunge into this pristine water hole, just as the timber getters did in days of yore. Platypuses have been seen in this part of the creek, but this shy creature is not easy to find, so there are no guarantees that you will be lucky enough to catch sight of one!

Of course, what goes up must come down again and he who walks down this hill must walk back up it. The ascent of some 300m can be a bit of a slog, but the return walk is made easier by the good condition of the track.

The round trip is a walk of just over 7km and it is recommended that at least 4 hours be allowed for the walk – and some R&R while out at the creek.

The beautiful Telopea speciosissima – Waratah – is endemic to the Mountain Lagoon area
Cabbage Tree Creek Track

Cabbage Tree Creek, T3 and Colo Meroo walking tracks all have a common start, about 1.2km down Sams Way from the first entrance to the loop road close to Dutch’s Nursery. Some 800m out the track from Sams Way, this signposted walk veers to the left off the main track, where walkers can go around a locked gate designed to prevent vehicle but not pedestrian access. The track continues to descend for about 1km to a cleared area. Be warned, in wet conditions (and not so wet ones) this area is infamous for its leeches – stay on the move!

From the clearing a short rough walking track continues in a south-westerly direction along a tributary running down into Cabbage tree creek. Halfway down this track if you drop over the side into the tributary you will find a beautiful waterfall, and adventurous hikers might like to go up the tributary above the waterfall in search of what is reputed to be Mountain Lagoon’s biggest tree – a gigantic turpentine.

As with the Tootie Creek Track, the only way out is to retrace one’s steps up the same track. On the way back, look out for a grove of casuarina trees whose fruit is the favourite food of the rare glossy black cockatoo.

Umbrella fern

Thick socks and sturdy boots provide some protection from leeches; a can of Bushman Heavy Duty Personal Insect Repellent (for sand flies, mosquitoes, tick, leeches and march flies) might also be a useful thing to carry with you! Allow 3 hours to walk this track.
Cabbage Tree Creek Waterfall
Long Ridge Track

The entrance to the Long Ridge Track is on the left along Mountain Lagoon Road, 1.5km after the bitumen ends as you come from Bilpin. This track skirts the western edge of the property Mill Paddock, and then meanders for 6km through the wet and dry sclerophyll forests typical of the area, featuring a good variety of local tree species such as grey gum (Eucalyptus punctata), stringybark (Eucalyptus globoidea), bloodwood (Eucalyptus eximia) and turpentine (Syncarpia glomulifera).

Like the majority of tracks in the Mountain Lagoon area that are now used by bushwalkers, Long Ridge was originally put in by loggers to gain access to the forest and haul out the timber. With the commercial timber industry long gone, the track today is maintained as a fire trail. While there is no spectacular view at the end of the walk, Long Ridge offers a pleasant, relatively easy 5.5km hike through some typical east coast Australian bushland and, as is the case with several other tracks in the area, you stand a good chance of having it all to yourself! 2km along the trail, a short side track leads to an abandoned shale quarry.
Sunset Rock

A short loop off Long Ridge Track, at the rear of the property Mill Paddock, leads to a rustic bench with an extensive view to the northwest over the Wollemi Wilderness, a perfect spot for sitting and watching the sun go down after another day in Paradise.

This very easy ramble of 500m will take you past many of the plant species typical of the area, including Acacia parramatensis (the local wattle), Lambertia formosa (the Mountain Devil), Persoonia pinifolia (Geebung), Pultenaea flexilis (Bacon and Eggs), and many more.

Take a picnic basket and someone special with you on this walk; as the poet said

_Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,  
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse - and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness -  
And Wilderness is Paradise enow._

_The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam_

Acacia parramatensis
T3 Track to “The End of the Earth”

The T3 Track (as do Colo Meroo and Cabbage Tree Creek Tracks) starts on Sams Way 1.2km from the western entrance to this loop road. A National Parks and Wildlife sign saying “Walking Tracks, Tootie Creek - Colo Meroo” clearly marks the beginning of the track, which is in fact a graded fire trail. The walk to the end of the track, avoiding the two side trails with locked gates, is 5.5km and after some initial “ups and downs” is a relatively flat walk through beautiful wet scerophyll eucalyptus woodland, finishing on a rise with spectacular views over the Wollemi Wilderness.

From the circular clearing at the end of the track, walk across the rocky outcrop to the edge of the escarpment and be amazed at the vast expanse of the Wollemi Wilderness, viewed from a special spot that the locals call

“The End of the Earth”.

Although there are no facilities here, this is a lovely place to have a picnic while enjoying the scenery. As you walk, keep an eye open for wallabies, goannas and other lizards, lyrebirds and a host of other smaller birds, and wildflowers in season.
The return walk of 11km is a comfortable day’s outing, allowing time to picnic and enjoy the panoramic view. Take water with you (there are no accessible creeks along this track) and keep to the track – and remember; the hilliest part of the walk is the last kilometre on the way home, so allow plenty of time to complete the return journey in daylight.

*The beautiful Angophora costata with its new, tanny-pink bark*
Colo Meroo - Gosper’s Ridge Track

Colo Meroo begins at the NPW signpost on Sams Way, branching off to the right at a locked gate 400m along the main track. The track climbs a steep but short hill then continues into a lovely damp glade (renowned for its funnel web spiders – don’t worry, you won’t see them on the track!). From the gate to the end of the wide track is 4.4km of easy, very pleasant walking. Beyond this point, however, the track narrows, continuing for a further 3km until it reaches the cliffs, with stunning views over the Colo River. Walkers should allow at least 6 hours for a return journey to this point.

From this viewing point the walk continues as more of a rough scramble along Maille’s Ridge for a further 2km to the Meroo Trig Station, before descending to the Colo River.

While this last section is roughly signposted, it is for serious, experienced walkers only and usually includes camping overnight at the river before walking out the following day. Those intending to go right through to the river should be well prepared with the appropriate equipment.
T3 Track

“The End of the Earth” to the Colo River

This walking “track” is for fit and experienced bushwalkers only. Walk – or preferably drive, to save time and energy – to the end of the driveable T3 Track. The track down to the river begins from the rocky outcrop at “The End of the Earth”, where you might just see a wedge-tailed eagle soaring in the thermals off the cliff edge. It descends 500m to the confluence of the Colo River and Tootie Creek, with brilliant views along the way of the Colo River gorge, Mt Townsend and Mount Morgan.

The return walk is 6km and you should allow 6 hours to complete the trip – this is not country to be out in at night without adequate preparation! Although the track basically follows the descending ridge, it is poorly signposted and in some spots not at all obvious. Walkers have become lost on this track, especially on the return journey! The Mountain Lagoon Topographic map (9031-3-S) and a compass should be at hand.

Nevertheless, it is a rewarding walk for serious bushwalkers. The river is truly beautiful with sandy beaches, waterholes and rapids.

Colo River near Tootie Creek
T3 Track

This track drops 500 metres steeply down to the junction of the Colo River and Tootie Creek. Along the way there are superb views of the Wollemi Wilderness and Colo River gorge.

Grade: Hard
Time: 4-6 hours return
Distance: 6 km return
Map: Mountain Lagoon 1:25 000 (9031-3-S)

At the river you will find rapids, swimming holes and sandy banks. There are no toilets or other facilities. Try to preserve natural values by leaving no trace of your visit.

More extensive walks in the area should only be undertaken by experienced bushwalkers. The country is much more rugged than the maps suggest. Walking along the Colo River is very difficult.

If you are planning to canoe or lilo down the river be prepared for the dangerous rapids. Avoid times of flood or likely rain. At low-flow times there may be insufficient depth in some parts.

Please report anything unusual to the Richmond NPWS Office on (02) 4588 5247.

WARNING

Take care when walking near cliffs, edges, and lily pads. Supervise children carefully.

For more information about your National Park contact National Parks and Wildlife Service P.O. Box 43 Blackheath 2785 (end of Govett Leap Road, Blackheath)