

Bushwalkers descending from the escarpment must be prepared for rough conditions and slow progress and take maps, compass, water, food and camping gear. Rivers and streams can rise rapidly after heavy rain in the upper catchments, so check weather reports. Notify friends of your timetable.

Maps covering the park include Ebor, Hyatt's Flat, Darkwood, Girralong, Five Day Creek, Thumb Creek and Bellbrook (1:25,000 topographic maps).

Things to See and Do

The first destination for visitors is usually Point Lookout. The two viewing platforms, one accessible by wheelchair, provide spectacular views of the near vertical escarpment. Below are deep valleys clothed in forest. A magnificent panorama stretching to the north, east and south is framed by the Pacific Ocean 70 km away. Accessible toilets are nearby.

Beside the carpark is a sturdy, rock-walled shelter shed with tables and an open fireplace with wood provided. The interior walls carry informative display boards. Just beyond the shelter shed is a plinth carrying an engraved brass plate indicating directions and distances to places of interest. Due to vegetative growth, this is now obsolete and the information has been transferred to sign boards at the lookouts.

Walking Tracks

From Point Lookout or Banksia Point the nearby escarpment can be explored on a range of walking tracks, some requiring reasonable levels of fitness. Map signs are provided at each track intersection giving advice on distances and expected walking times.

Eagle's Nest Track is an outstandingly beautiful 2.5 km (about two hours) circuit that features lookouts, basalt cliffs, weeping rockfaces and mossy Antarctic Beech forest – there are some steep sections. Look for icicles on Weeping Rock on cold mornings!

A very pleasant place for a rest or a cuppa is the Banksia Point Picnic Area. Here, apart from the Residence and a Chalet (more detail below), there are tables, water, fireplaces (wood supplied) and toilets. This is also the

most likely place to sight and hear a lyrebird, and even meet a rare and inquisitive Spotted-tailed Quoll.

Lyrebird Circuit commences near Weeping Rock and can be, via Tree Fern Valley, a connection to Wright's Lookout and the Cascades, or it can be a complete circuit back to Banksia Point. The circuit is about 5.5 km long and has some steep and often slippery sections.

Mid-way on the Lyrebird Circuit is the access to both Wright's Lookout track and Cascades Walk. The walk to Wright's Lookout is along an exposed rock promontory with low heath vegetation. The 180° views are highly favoured by photographers. It is only about 1 km to the furthest lookout point, so allow one hour for this venture.

Cascades Walk, also accessible via Robinson's Knob fire trail, is arguably the most beautiful of all the walks in this park. It is best to travel clockwise along a smooth track that descends through Antarctic Beech forest studded with an orchid understorey to Five Day Creek. Return up the creek, some paddling required (!), to a really stunning waterfall and back up hill to the start (approximately 4 km, allow two hours). From here, the return is either back up to Banksia Point along Lyrebird Walk, or up to Thungutti, west along the Robinson's Knob trail.

Tea Tree Falls Walk is both pleasant and easy, especially if commenced from Banksia Point. It winds its way downhill, past Tom's Cabin, to the Thungutti camping area. Allow 45 minutes one way.



Cascades walking track.



Thungutti camping area.

Vegetation

The park lies within the Eastern Australian temperate forests eco-region. It is noted for the wide variety of plant and animal species. The diverse vegetation in the park includes sub-tropical, warm temperate and cool temperate rainforest in the higher

Wildlife

The richness and variety of animal life here reflects the park's wide range of habitats. Evening visitors may see kangaroos, wallabies, several species of glider and possums, and the highly endangered Spotted-tailed Quoll. Dingoes, Koalas, Common Bentwing Bats, Brown Antechinus and Northern Brown Bandicoots are some other mammals found in the park.

Over 100 bird species have been recorded. Larger species include the Wedge-tailed Eagle, Greater Sooty Owl, Sulphur-crested and Black Cockatoos. Commonly seen are the Crimson Rosella, Rufous Fantail, Pied Currawong and White-throated Treecreeper in the open forests, whilst winter-flowering banksias attract Lewin's Honeyeaters and Eastern Spinebills. In the rainforests the Superb Lyrebird reigns supreme, its resonating call and impressive vocal mimicry echoing in the valleys. Another distinctive bird call is from the Eastern Whipbird. Listen also for the "yowl" of the Green Catbird.

The park has been identified by Birdlife International as an Important Bird Area because it supports one of five remaining populations of Rufous Scrub-birds. Other birds of significance are Flame and Pale-yellow Robins, Paradise Riflebirds, Green Catbirds, Regent Bowerbirds and Australian Logrunners.



Spotted-tailed Quoll.



Northern Brown Bandicoot.



Green Catbird.



Superb Lyrebird.



Glossy Black Cockatoo.

altitudes. There are also areas of sclerophyll forest, sub-alpine woodland, heathland and swampland. Brush Box, Sydney Blue Gum and Tallowwood predominate.

Heathland is found at Wright's Lookout and elsewhere. The number of different plant species in the park is estimated to be around 1,000 with, no doubt, more to be found. These species are spread through a wide range of plant communities.



Sydney Blue Gums (inset: Koala resting in Blue Gum).

A cold-tolerant open woodland of Snow Gum, Shining Gum and tussocky Snow Grass dominates the high altitude country around Point Lookout. Over the edge of the escarpment, cool temperate rainforests of Antarctic Beech stand draped in orchids and hanging moss. The Antarctic Beech has an important place in the story of the development of flowering plants and the breakup of the supercontinent of Gondwana.

Further down the escarpment are warm temperate rainforests of Coachwood and Sassafras, and the sheltered valleys occupied by subtropical rainforests of Booyong, Yellow Carabeen and Red Cedar. Eucalypt forests containing Sydney Blue Gum, Brushbox and Tallow-wood grow on the ridgetops and spurs.

Areas of heath, swamp and mallee complete the diversity of vegetation within the park.

million years ago, this massive volcano was centred forming a rim over 300 m thick. Active until about 19 at least five basalt lava flows from the Ebor volcano, The precipitous cliffs of the plateau edge are the result of

Geology and Landform

(Styx River Forest). Follow this road, mostly unsealed, past the Dutton Trout Hatchery, turning left at the junction with Forest Way National Park.

65 km towards the coast. Turn right to New England and follow the Waterfall Way east for approximately Visitor Information Centre. Turn left at the traffic lights

Getting There

Snowy Mountains. Public access to the park focuses on the Point Lookout area (1,563 m above sea level) from where, on a clear day, the Pacific Ocean is visible. This is the second highest mountain in the region and one of the highest places north of the through mossy beech forests and fern gullies.

significant bird population. Clearly marked bushwalks lead species, large numbers of mammals and reptiles and a subalpine heath and wetlands. There are over 1,000 plant subtropical rainforest, including wet and dry eucalypt forest, Snow Gum woodland and Antarctic Beech rainforest to thickly forested Bellinger River valley. Ecosystems range from and Styx Rivers drain across the tablelands. To the east is the streams. To the north and west, the Nymboida, Guy Fawkes consists of impressive cliffs, rugged ridges, spurs and undulating Northern Tablelands plateau, the wilderness located on the precipitous escarpment of the east of the providing an undisturbed refuge for flora and fauna.

New England National Park was first gazetted in 1935 after intense lobbying by Mr Phillip A Wright of "Wallamumbi". Initially 17,070 ha, it has been increased over the years to 72,241 ha. In 1986, this area was inscribed on the World Heritage List in recognition of its outstanding natural heritage values. Much of the park is a Wilderness Area,

A Special Place

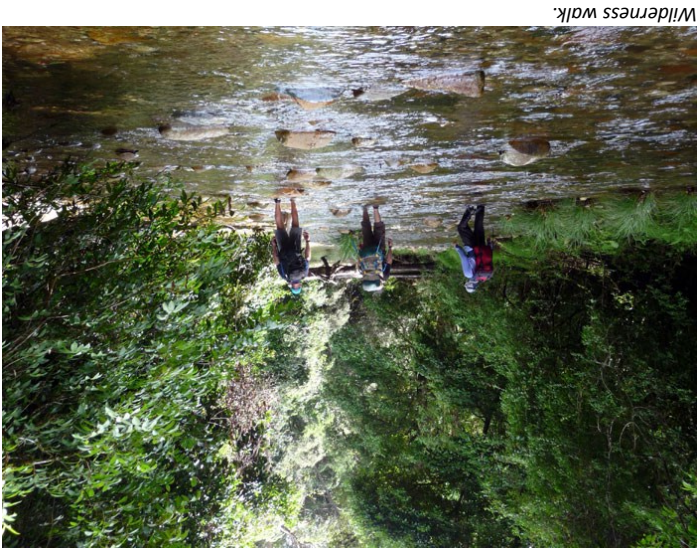
New England National Park

Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area



Wrights Lookout showing ancient rocks and heathland.

around The Crescent, a semi-circular ridge in the Bellinger Valley, visible from Point Lookout. Subsequent erosion has created the dramatic escarpment seen today. Layers of lava on prominent cliffs north of Point Lookout are clearly visible, as they are at Ebor Falls. Below the basalt lie ancient folded metamorphic rocks, almost 500 million years old, which have been carved into a myriad of virtually inaccessible peaks and ridges and are now densely forested.



Wilderness walk.

New England National Park contains a significant wilderness area of more than 52,000 ha. Wilderness is a large area of natural land, where genetic diversity and natural cycles remain essentially unaltered. Many interesting walking routes can be planned and a guidebook is available at the Armidale Visitor Information Centre and Dorrigo Rainforest Centre. The minimal Impact Bushwalking Code should be followed on all walks into wilderness areas.

Wilderness



Cascade Falls, Five Day Creek.

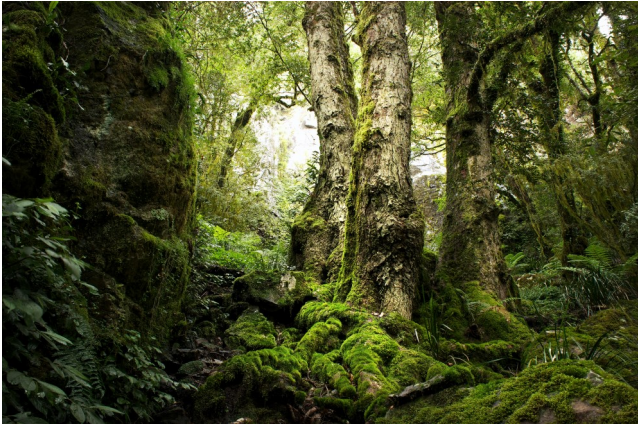
Things to Keep in Mind

If visiting in winter, it is a good idea to bring warm clothes because, at such a high altitude, the region experiences frequent snow falls and cold temperatures.

High altitudes also mean high solar radiation. Wear sunscreen and/or use a hat.

Drinking water is only available at picnic and camp sites. Take your own drinking water for elsewhere.

There is limited mobile reception in this park. Bear in mind that the weather in the area can be extreme and unpredictable, so **be prepared!**



Antarctic Beech on Eagle's Nest Track.

Accommodation

“The Residence”, “The Chalet” and Tom’s Cabin

The Residence and The Chalet have similar levels of comfort and facilities, sleeping ten and six respectively. Large groups can book both as they are located together at Banksia Point.

Further away Tom’s Cabin offers rustic bushwalkers’ accommodation with bunk beds, but no electricity.

For bookings, contact the Dorrigo Rainforest Centre on 02 6657 2309.

Camping at Thungutti

There are 10 campsites here under tall eucalypt trees and plenty of seclusion. Tables and fireplaces (wood provided) abound. The site also has toilets and a shower

(cold!), plus a large shelter shed with gas barbeques and tables. Drinking water (untreated) is on tap. No need to book; fees apply.

Caravans and motorhomes are not suited to Thungutti and are best accommodated at the Little Styx River Junction rest area, back down the road about 2 km. Toilets and barbeques are available beside the Styx River. Pets are permitted in this area, but not in the National Park itself.

The nearest caravan parks are in Armidale and Dorrigo.

Armidale - Armidale Tourist Park - phone 1800 355 578; Highlander Van Village - phone 02 6772 4768; Armidale Showground - phone 0400 966 665.

Dorrigo - Dorrigo Mountain Resort - phone 02 6657 2564.

Ebor Hotel Motel - 11690 Waterfall Way, telephone 02 6775 9155. Situated in the little village of Ebor it has four motel rooms available.

Moffatt Falls Lodge - telephone 02 6775 9166. Up-market accommodation in a peaceful bush setting, overlooking the magnificent waterfalls.

Moffatt Falls Cottage - telephone 02 6775 9166. Self-contained and fully appointed cottage in an ideal location for those who want to escape from it all and enjoy the tranquility of the bush.

Two Styx Cottage and Cabins - telephone 02 6658 2942. Three self-contained cottages (Platypus, Flame Robin and Lyrebird) in a picturesque setting.

Yarrandoo Eco Lodge - telephone 02 6775 9219. Situated on Point Lookout Road, off Waterfall Way. Offers a range of accommodation styles, from backpacker to up-market. Conference facilities and a restaurant are available.



Top left: Tom’s Cabin;
Top right: The Residence;
Bottom: The Chalet.