

Box Vale Walking Track

Boxvale Road, Welby

AT A GLANCE

Grade: Easy

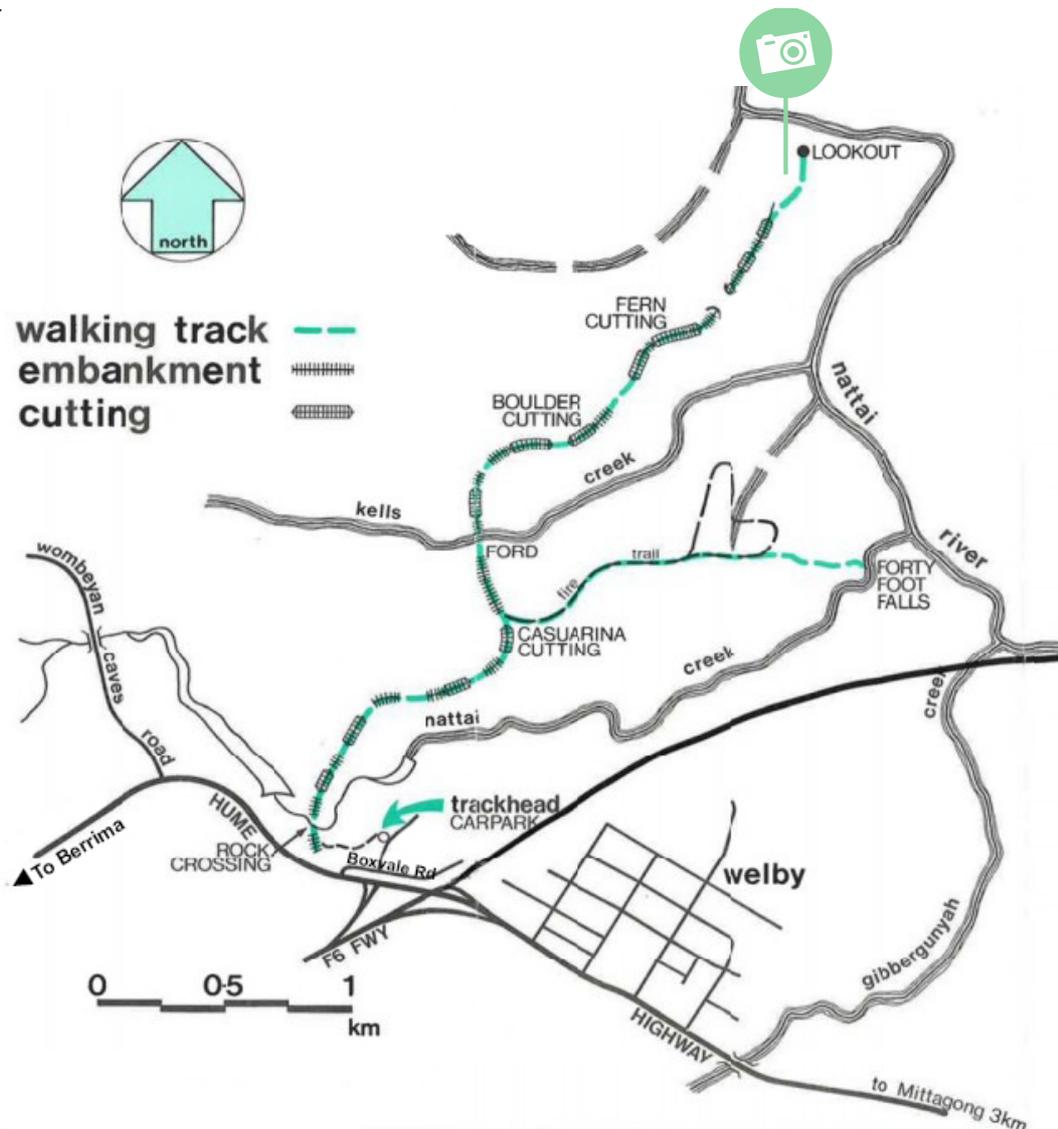
Track 1
Time: 3 hours
Distance:
8.8 km return

Track 2 – Spur Track
Time: 2 hours
Distance:
1.8 km return

Conditions:
Bring your own water

Facilities:
Picnic tables, BBQ and
Car Park (at Box Vale Rd)

Location:
The Trackhead is
located about 250m off
the Old Hume Hwy. The
turn-off is 3.7km west
of Mittagong & .08km
east of Wombeyan
Caves Road. Starting
point is Boxvale Road.



Tracks

Track 1

The track follows the formation of an historic railway line and passes through cuttings, along embankments and through a tunnel 84 metres in length.

Although much of the surrounding terrain is steep and rocky, the 4.4km walking track has easy grades and the return walk takes approx. 3 hours.

Spur Track – parts very steep

There is also a 1.8km spur track through pleasant bushland to Forty Foot Falls. The initial 1.5km is along a fire trail of easy grade and the return walk takes about 1 hour. However, the Falls cannot be seen from the end of the fire trail and a **very steep** track (dropping 100 metres in elevation) leads to a vantage point below the Falls. This section would be quite difficult for a person not accustomed to negotiating

such tracks. The return walk along the entire 1.8km spur track takes about 2 hours.

Dogs

Bring your dog for the walk too, as dogs on leash are permitted.

so close, a world away

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Flora & Fauna

The country through which the track passes is based on a Hawkesbury sandstone formation. The route is generally, along a spur to the edge of the Nattai Gorge where deposits of Narrabeen sandstone occur. The surrounding terrain is steep and rocky and often there is very little top soil. In some areas such as at the commencement of the track the trees are stunted, and the timber cover is sparse. The vegetation of the area is generally classified as dry sclerophyll forest and during the past 100 years has intermittently been logged for commercial timbers. The principal timber species found close to the track are messmate, mountain ash, ironbark, stringybark and gum.

In the gullies that drain into the Nattai Gorge where conditions are not as dry, there are patches of wet sclerophyll forest. An example of such an area can be seen at the Forty Foot Falls.

Since the removal of the railway line late last century, natural regeneration has occurred along the embankments and in the cuttings. The soil, aspect and drainage in the cutting varies, and as a result different species of vegetation have become dominant, with one cutting supporting casuarinas, and another, tree ferns.

The area through which the walking track passes, supports a variety of native birdlife. Species that are commonly sighted include crimson rosellas, kookaburras, golden and rufous whistlers, grey thrush, pied currawongs, magpies and a variety of wrens. About 14 species of mammals are known to inhabit the locality and wombats, wallabies and possums are common. The monotremes, echidna and platypus, were common, however the closer settlement of the adjacent area has results in less frequent sightings.

Historical Background

This part of the Southern Tablelands was inhabited by Aborigines for many 1000s of years until, in the 1870's they moved from the area. There are many significant archaeological sites in the region that provide information on the culture of the Aboriginal communities. Axe grinding, or tool sharpening grooves are found on areas of flat, soft rock such as sandstone. These are usually near waterholes or creeks as water was used as a lubricant in the sharpening process. Several rock shelters and overhangs that were used to provide shelter from rain and sun have been in the Hawkesbury sandstone sections of the Nattai Gorge. In addition, open campsites have been found on the shale areas and where sandstone and shale meet, although some evidence of Aboriginal occupation can be found in almost any level area that is close to a watercourse.

European settlers extended their interest in settlement to the Mittagong region in the late 18th Century. When the Southern Railway was extended into the region in the 1860's, Mittagong was a well-established settlement while Bowral and Moss Vale had undergone no development.

This was because as early as 1848 an iron works had been established at Mittagong which was followed in 1873 by a very extensive shale oil works at Joadja. Mittagong had the potential to become a large industrial centre, however it did not eventuate due to various economic problems.

Part of the natural resources of the area was a coal deposit on the Nattai River discovered in 1851. The first major attempt to exploit this resource was the incorporation of the Nattai Coal Mining Company in 1878. However, lack of capital left the eventual opening of a large working & construction of the railway line to a new company – the Mittagong Coal-Mining Company Ltd.

The line was completed in 1888 at an estimated cost of \$32,000 and was constructed to the standard gauge and specifications of the Southern Railway to enable the Government engines and trucks to run on it. The

line left the main line just south of Mittagong Station and followed this walking track for its latter part, terminating at the Nattai River Gorge some 160 metres above the coal mine. The line was over 6km in length. Changes in ownership and a change in name in 1860 to Box Vale Colliery were not enough to ensure the successful operation of the mine and in 1896 the mine closed. During the years in which the mine operated an average of about 1000 tons of coal per annum was transported along the railway line. After mining operations ceased all plant and equipment was removed including the railway track sleepers and the timber trestle bridges that spanned the creeks. At Kell's Creek the circular holes that provided the footings for the large vertical timbers can still be seen in the rock bed of the creek.



Things to remember

- Stay on the track – help protect bushland by not damaging any flora or fauna
- Observe fire bans – do not smoke near vegetation
- No firearms or hunting equipment to be carried
- Take your rubbish home
- Appreciate the native animals from a distance
- Keep noise levels down – appreciate the desire of others for peace and relaxation.
- Conserve water
- Do not use the bike or horse trails
- Move quietly near stock
- Use sunscreen blockout
- Water is not provided
- There are no toilets
- Water is not provided