

80 WALKS BY 80 LEADERS



Morton NP: Yadboro River area

Leader: Brian Piper

Date: 23-28 April 2019

Participants: Brian Piper, Ewa Jazwinski, Ena Levinson, Geoff Bishop



Walk description:

4 days of walking. We'll drive to Yadboro river and car camp for the arrival night, then an overnight pack walk for the first 2 days, returning to the car camp for 2 big day walks. Map: Touga Tue - Arrive at Yadboro river and car camp for the night, ready for an early start Wed & Thu - The Castle, overnight at Cooyoyo campsite, Monolith Valley, Mount Owen, Shrouded Gods. 1600m Fri - Day walk to Byangee Mountain (Caves, Arches etc.) 8h/1000m Sat - Day walk to Pigeon House Gorge 8h/860m Sun - return home

Report:

Day 1 - Ascend The Castle

We all arrived the previous afternoon just before sunset so we could make an early start. We set off from Long Gully campsite located on the banks of the Yadboro River to climb the formidable "The Castle". From the start this rock giant

is imposing, the track starts through lush rain-forest and after only a few hundred metres boots were exchanged for "cros" in order to cross the river. After replacing our boots we headed off up the gradual slope through the rain forest and then as we climbed Kalianna Ridge the gradient increased until we reached the base of the cliff.

After a short fixed-chain assisted climb the next couple of hours were spent following the base of the cliff in a northerly direction towards Meakins Pass - the traverse slow and arduous, the track badly eroded in places and carrying packs up, down, over and under made for slow progress. At the end of the cliff we headed further uphill on

many steps lining what doubles as a creek in inclement weather!

Finally we arrive at a scratched word on the cliff "TUNNEL". After removing our packs there was a tight squeeze through a small hole opening in the rock into a very narrow slot which traverses the "tadpole", a wavy line of cliff fragments resembling a larval frog - the end of the Castle massif. At the end of the tunnel slot there's a 10m rope assisted descent to another track. This track heads around the other side of the cliff-line until the start of the final ascent is reached. This commences with a large boulder jammed in a rough chimney slot which is tricky to clamber over.

Once passed there is a series of obstacles over, under, around, several rope assists and finally the summit plateau where the 360 degree views are some of the best

anywhere. Time became the enemy as the descent and final 1km to our campground had to be completed before nightfall. Cooyoyo Creek campground was found after 500m of downhill steps. We all enjoyed our well-earned meals, a perfect clear and surprisingly warm evening. Geoff shared some of his astronomical knowledge as we gazed at millions of stars above. Ena attempted some fire lighting but soon gave up as tiredness took over us all. Sleep beckoned as the next day promised to be equally challenging and rewarding.



Day 2 - Monolith Valley and descent to Long Gully

As dawn broke we wandered the 50m to Cooyoyo lookout to watch the sunrise and the golden light on the stunningly beautiful cliffs of Byangee Mountain - the subject of Day 3's adventure. After some breakfast fuel we climbed back up to the Saddle and offloaded our packs and hid them amongst the dense undergrowth choosing to carry a snack and water for the next three hours as we explored the valley's wonders. On to Monolith Valley, the giant Natural

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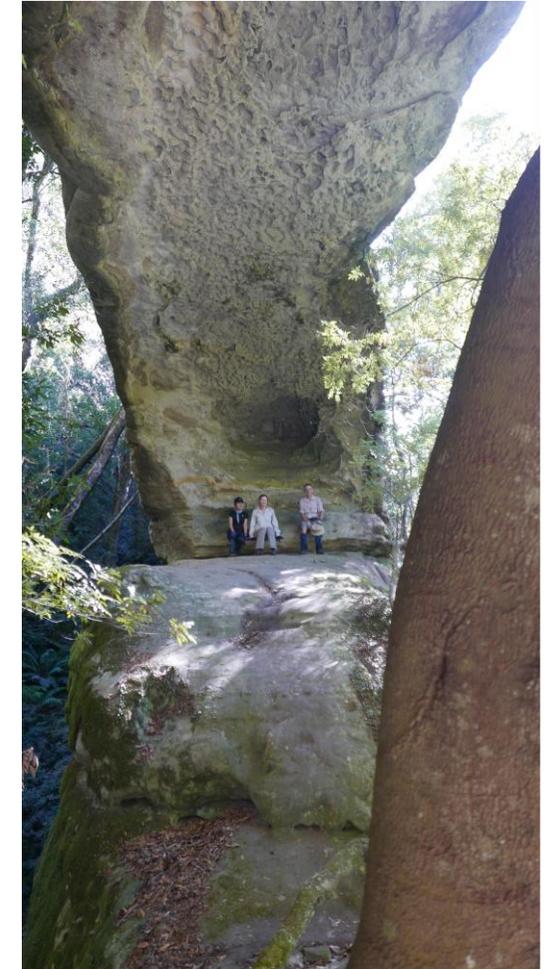
Arch, Seven Gods Pinnacles and the Green Room each worthy of the walk in their own right. We returned to our packs and started the long walk back to Long Gully campground where we arrived just before dusk - in time for a wash in the Yadboro River and a hearty camp meal.

After several hundred metres an enormous rock was encountered which had fallen from above, it had landed forming a triangular space between it and the cliff. The space can be entered through a tight squeeze at the western end, once through the squeeze a large cavern appears with 10m high tree ferns growing near the eastern end. These ferns allow a green glow to fall in what is known as Cathedral Cave. Once out of the cave Castle Gap is reached after another 200m. Across the gap, a short saddle, the seemingly impossible Byangee Walls are encountered. Walking around the Northern cliff for 700m a small cairn indicates the start of an improbable but possible route to the top. Many ropes have been placed to assist in the challenge ahead.

Finally, on reaching the summit more spectacular views extend to the ocean near Ulladulla in the East and across the full extent of the Budawangs in all other directions. The return included a short diversion to view another natural rock arch near Castle Gap. The return down the trail was as pleasant as the ascent earlier in the day.

Day 4 - Pigeon House Mountain

Our last day was rewarded with a relatively easy walk to the summit of the iconic Pigeon House Mountain - a straightforward 3h return walk on a very busy track attracting many day trippers to see for themselves the views across Morton and Budawang National Parks.



Day 3 - Byangee Walls

Another early start. We headed out of the campground with day packs only, up Byangee trail - a very pleasant trail which starts with the crossing of Yadboro River once again then a comfortable gradual incline which gets progressively steeper. There are many great views along the trail. After an hour and a half the southern end of The Castle cliff-line was reached then we turned East heading around the base of the cliff.