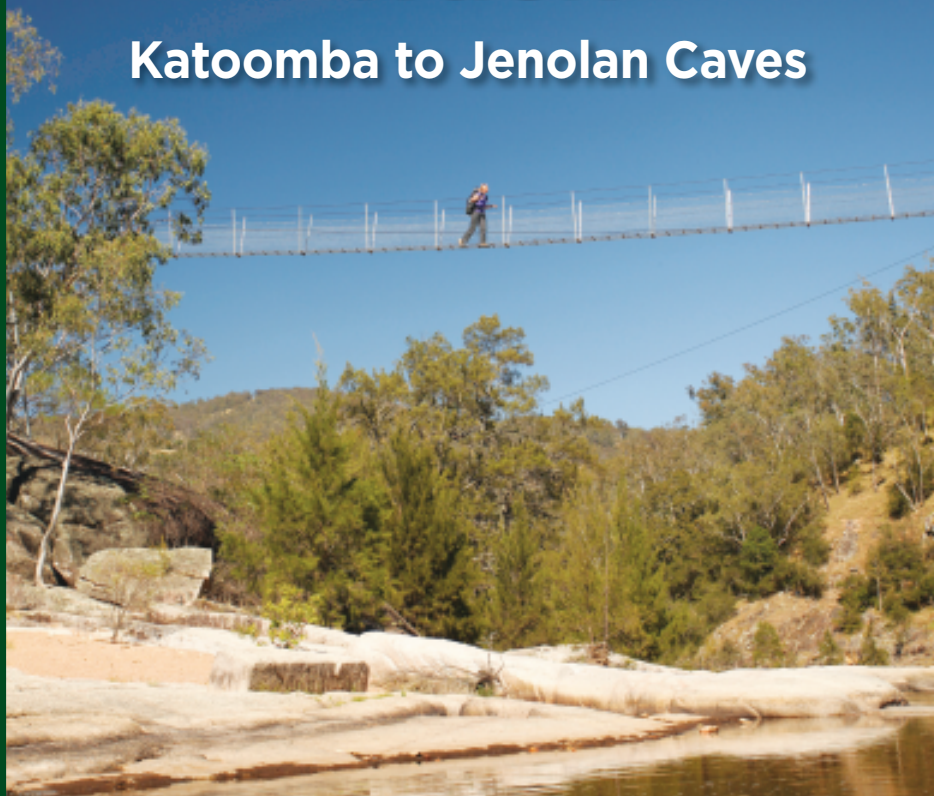




The Six Foot Track

Katoomba to Jenolan Caves



The classic Blue Mountains long-distance track



- Discover this 45-km historic track as one three-day walk, or as a series of half and full-day walks
- Camp or stay in lodge accommodation along the way
- Includes topographical maps, track notes, terrain profiles, photos, GPS references and trip planners

Turn this book around to view walk directions for Jenolan Caves to Katoomba

The Six Foot Track

Katoomba to Jenolan Caves

By
Matt McClelland and the
Wildwalks Team



Dedication

To the next generation, particularly Eric and Laura. I hope that we take great care of these natural places, and I trust that you can pass them onto your children, in even better health. Let's not settle for sustainability but work towards a flourishing environment.

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Note: Turn this book over for tracknotes running from Jenolan Caves to Katoomba.







Introduction

The Six Foot Track is not just a bushwalk but a historic journey – and a great adventure. Originally built about 2 metres wide, over 100 years ago, this route was quickly nicknamed the Six Foot (wide) Track. The name stuck, and now this walk takes you on a fantastic journey exploring the natural beauty and historic stories of this part of the Blue Mountains.

Starting from the Explorers Tree in Katoomba, the Six Foot Track was first established in 1884 to provide good access to Jenolan Caves by horse. Now revamped, this walk guides you through a mix of dense native bushland, past towering sandstone cliffs, granite creek beds, farmland, pine tree forests, and into the limestone valley of Jenolan.

Most people complete the Six Foot Track as a three-day hiking journey. The sense of achievement at the end of this historic walk is just fantastic, as is the chance to get away from it all and spend a few nights camping. You have the chance to share the track with a variety of Australian wildlife, such as wombats, kangaroos and wallabies, and a vast array of birds that you will see and hear along the way.

Whether you want to tackle the walk in one go, or split it into parts, this book provides notes and maps to help you plan your journey. You could try day walks, an overnight hike, an inn-to-inn luxury walk or join a tour group. The itineraries and information in the middle of the book will help you plan your walk at a pace that best suits you.



Introduction

As with our other books, this book is not just about helping you on track, but helping you get excited and organised for your walk. You may find the book also becomes a bit of a souvenir. Walking the Six Foot Track makes you a part of history – you will want to share your journey with other people for many years to come.

Acknowledgements – from Matt McClelland

First I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land the Six Foot Track travels through, the Gundungurra and Wiradjuri peoples, and pay my respect to their elders both past and present.

Thank you also to the hardworking people at the Six Foot Track Heritage Trust, Crown Lands, NPWS, State Forests, Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust, and to the private land owners. So many people and different organisations work together to maintain this track and the surrounding environments and allow us passage.

Thank you to Kieran and Ian who first documented the Six Foot Track on www.wildwalks.com.

Geoff Mallinson and Caro Ryan have worked hard to produce the companion website for the book, www.sixfoottrack.com. Their



expertise in design and video production has been a wonderful asset. Their friendship and willingness to help carry the huge load of batteries on track is still an encouragement to me – thank you.

To the people at Woodslane, thanks for your continued commitment to quality. Thanks to Veechi Stuart who had the vision and kindly embraced this unusual upside-down book. Thanks to Kate Rowe the most helpful and thoughtful editor, she helped make this book not only legible but enjoyable to read. Thanks to Kasun Senaratne for the wonderful design effort, the book looks fantastic. Kasun also helped design the housing for the 360-degree camera system I built to take more than 10 000 panoramic images on the companion website. To my family and family in-law, thank you for your support and love. To my wife Fiona who is so kind as to encourage and work with me. And of course, to our two wonderful kids, Eric and Laura, thanks for the joy and fun times walking in the bush.



How to use this book

This book has been written to help you get the most out of your journey on the Six Foot Track. It has been a lot of fun writing it and we are sure you will have a lot of fun walking with it. This is our first 'upside-down book' that allows you to choose which direction you want to walk the track. You can start walking from either Katoomba or Jenolan Caves and both directions are equally good. In fact some people do both in one go, over two days – this is called the Twelve Foot Track!

Introduction



The tracknotes have been written in a visual way to help you read through and get a sense of the journey. This helps you prepare for the walk and also helps you visualise the walk better, so you will hardly need to pull the book out whilst walking.

There are three main parts to the book: the tracknotes from Katoomba to Jenolan, the reverse notes from Jenolan to Katoomba and, in the middle of this book, lots of extra helpful information to help in your planning, such as the history of the track, best times to walk, itineraries, tips, safety information, and lots more.



Exploring the tracks around Jenolan Caves

Walk grades and times

Establishing grades and times can be a little tricky, and there are many ways to classify a walk. The walks were initially graded using the AS 2156.1-2001, Australia's standard for track classification. To keep things simple, however, in this book each walk is classified Easy, Medium or Hard.



Some general rules of thumb when looking at walk grades in this book:

Easy: Mostly flat, suitable for all ages and for people new to bushwalking; take care with children. Generally good track surfaces. No bushwalking experience required. May include gentle hills or short section of steps.

Medium: Suitable for most ages and fitness levels, especially people who walk occasionally. May contain short, steeper sections, with loose, rough or sandy ground, or lots of steps. Sturdy shoes recommended.

Hard: Suitable for people who bushwalk regularly. Contains steep or rough sections, and/or requires particular attention to safety, navigation and

bushcraft skills. Requires reasonable levels of fitness. Sturdy footwear essential.

For the walk as a whole, a good level of fitness is required. You'll soon figure out whether your own pace is faster or slower than is shown in this book. The walk times do not include time for rests, side trips or safety margins; please always allow extra time. In addition, remember that hills can really slow things down. A relatively flat six-kilometre walk will take half the time of a similar length walk that climbs and descends 600 metres (Google "Naismith's rule" to learn more). This has been taken into account for all the times provided in this book.

Introduction

Preparation and safety

This is a guide book; it is not a field guide or a bushcraft book. You will find a few hints and tips in this book, and an extensive Safety section, but it is not designed to give you survival, navigation or bushcraft skills. Please read the information about safety, facilities and other resources carefully, and think about what food, equipment and clothing you will carry, and also where you are going to collect water, and how you will treat it. The notes will not prompt you to collect water, as your need will vary greatly according to the season, weather and your supplies. However, you must make sure that you have always enough with you to supply you on the next leg of your journey.



The Six Foot Track is a wonderful walk, but it does lead into remote areas and therefore requires skills and knowledge for dealing with hazards. All the walks have significant possible hazards, such as potential flooding, hot weather, lightning strikes, sickness, food poisoning, tick bites, falls, bites, strains, etc. Many of these hazards are not specifically mentioned in this book, and even though they are unlikely to occur each walker needs to consider and manage any potential risk. A bit of time thinking and planning will help you have a safer and more enjoyable time.

No journey is risk free; but the better prepared you are, the safer and more fun your journey is likely to be. Do spend time getting your body and mind ready. If you are not an experienced walker, start by reading and chatting with other people and exploring some smaller, easier walks. The book has been written to help you prepare, but there is so much that we can't cover — you will need to think through food, fitness, equipment, risks and skills. If you do not have the skills required, invite a friend with the skills, join a walking club or a tour or group, or undertake a course; there are always people happy to help you learn.

Maps

The following symbols are used in the maps for this book:



2 Megalong Valley to Coxs River Campsite

This section of the Six Foot Track explores a mix of farmland and native forest before giving you the opportunity to explore the beautiful Coxs River. Starting with a touch of history at the old Megalong Cemetery, you then wander through open farmland with some great views back to the distant escarpment. Behind the farms you continue through a few pleasant valleys and down the side of the valley to the granite edges of the Coxs River. After some time cooling off, you can choose to wade through the river, or bring out your inner adventurer on the memorable Bowtells metal swing bridge above. The dirt road at the end of this walk is 4WD access only from Jenolan Caves Rd.

At a glance

Grade: Medium

Time: 3 hrs

Distance: 7.5 km one way

Ascent/descent: 310 metres ascent/610 metres descent

Conditions: All the significant waterway crossings are bridged. Best to avoid on very hot days, although on warm days you can make the most of the Coxs River.

GPS of start: -33.7356, 150.2346

GPS of end: -33.7433, 150.1787



Bowtells Bridge

2 Megalong Valley to Coxs River Campsite

Getting there

Car: From Blackheath, cross the train line, turn left to follow Station Street then right onto Shipley Road and left onto Megalong Road. Now drive along Megalong Road for just over 14 kilometres. Soon after you cross Megalong Creek you will find a well-signposted parking area where the Six Foot Track crosses the road. (If the main road becomes dirt you have gone too far.)

Driving to the Coxs River Campsite: If doing this as a day walk, it will usually be easier to allow extra time and retrace your steps back to the start, but car access is possible in a 4WD to the Coxs River Campsite. Follow the driving directions, then the tracknotes for the Black Range campsite to Coxs River walk (turn this book over, and go to page 17), as that walk follows the road all the way. At times this can be a challenging drive and some four wheel driving experience is recommended.

Walk directions

1 From the car park on Megalong Road (about 400 metres south of Megalong Creek), follow the *Six Foot Track* sign over the cattle grid or stile and check out the large sheltered *Six Foot Track* information sign. Now continue gently downhill along the dirt road (away from Megalong Road) for about 80 metres to arrive beside a stone memorial, marking Megalong Cemetery on your left.

2 Continue straight ahead for about 80 metres, still heading downhill along the dirt road, and pass through a gate with a *No Through Road* sign. About 300 metres later you pass a few driveways, beside the farmland, and cross another cattle grid. Then after another 150 metres the road leads you close to Megalong Creek, where a sign reminds

Point of interest – Megalong Cemetery

The Megalong Cemetery became the final resting place for at least 14 people who died between 1894 and 1931. It is very overgrown, and many of the grave sites are in poor repair or can no longer be easily found – please take care in the area to avoid any further damage. A tall stone monument marks the edge of the cemetery. This cemetery is currently under the management of the Blue Mountains City Council, and is recognised by the National Trust.



2 Megalong Valley to Coxs River Campsite

visitors this is private land. About 30 metres further on, stay on the main dirt road as it veers right at a Y-intersection, then cross a cattle grid. Now wander uphill, still on the dirt road, for just over 200 metres, with views of the escarpment behind you, to cross another grid and come to an intersection marked with a *Six Foot Track* sign.

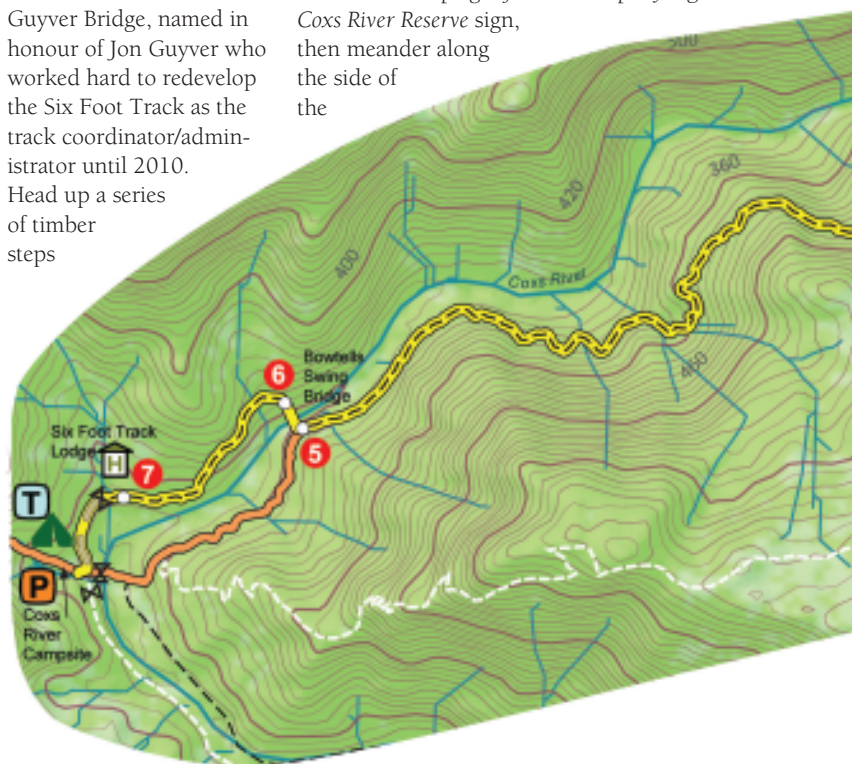
3 Turn right to follow the *Six Foot Track* sign downhill along the narrow track into the valley. Cross a small creek on the timber Guyver Bridge, named in honour of Jon Guyver who worked hard to redevelop the *Six Foot Track* as the track coordinator/administrator until 2010.

Head up a series of timber steps

and over a rise. The track now leads you alongside a wire fence for almost 100 metres, down through the farmland and across a valley above a dam, to a metal stile just before a dirt driveway. Turn right here and climb the fence using the stile, then follow the *Six Foot Track* sign.

The track undulates over a series of hills for about 300 metres before crossing another fence using another metal stile beside a large tree. Stay on the track as it leads you uphill for 200 metres to pass a *Private Land – No Camping before Coxs River Reserve* sign, then meander along the side of the

hill for a further 150 metres before heading into a wooded forest and down some timber steps. Cross a steep gully and continue along the side of this hill for just over 100 metres, passing a 35 km 6FT arrow post, then 150 metres later cross another fence using a metal stile. Continue for 600 metres through a mix of farmland and open forest, crossing a few more steep gullies with timber steps. Then you will head through a gate (make sure to close it behind you), marked with a few *Private Property* signs.



2 Black Range Campsite to Coxs River Campsite

Following in the historic footsteps of generations before, this walk guides you through the middle section of the Six Foot Track. You have the chance to explore a wide variety of bushland, from the dry open forests high on the ridge lines through farmland to the moist tree fern gullies of Little River. Walking along a well-managed 4WD dirt road and crossing a few creeks, you will descend from 1200 m above sea level to 290 m and the edge of the Coxs River. There are some beautiful views towards the Katoomba escarpment from Kiangatha Yards. The valley at Alum Creek and Little River provides a pleasant cool spot to rest or camp. Finishing at the Coxs River is a real treat as you can take a dip and explore the holes carved in the granite riverbed or just wander among the casuarina stands beside the water.

At a glance

Grade: Hard

Time: 7 hrs 30 mins

Distance: 19 km one way

Ascent/descent: 400 metres ascent/1310 metres descent

Conditions: Following a 4WD dirt road for the whole walk, little shade; best avoided on hot days. A lot of downhill walking, steep in places; can be hard on your knees. Some creek crossing where you are likely to get wet feet; creeks may become impassable after rain.

GPS of start: -33.7551, 150.0484

GPS of end: -33.7433, 150.1787



Fire trail near Kiangatha Yards

2 Black Range Campsite to Coxs River Campsite

Getting there

Car: From the Great Western Hwy about 11 kilometres west of Mount Victoria, turn onto Jenolan Caves Road following the Jenolan Caves sign. Stay on Jenolan Caves Road for 23.6 kilometres (passing through Hampton) and continue straight ahead at the intersection with Duckmaloi Rd, where there are traffic lights and road closed boom gates. Keep following the signs to Jenolan Caves for another 8.8 kilometres to pass Boggy



Creek Road (a dirt road on your right). After 450 metres further along the main sealed Jenolan Caves Road you will come to an intersection with un-signposted Black Range Road, a dirt road on your left. Turn left onto this dirt (2WD) road, then after 860 metres turn right at the large 5-way intersection. After just 100 metres you will come to the signposted and fenced Black Range Campsite, on your right.

Drive to Coxs River Campsite: Car access is possible in a 4WD to the Coxs River Campsite. This walk follows the 4WD road all the way, so to drive to the Coxs River just follow the notes for this walk in a 4WD. At times this can be a challenging drive and some four wheel driving experience is recommended.

The well-maintained Black Range camping ground is a fenced campsite beside the Six Foot Track, and is also accessible by car. For more information, refer to the box in the previous walk on page 15.

Australian birds – Yellow-tailed black cockatoos

The eastern yellow-tailed black cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus funereus*) is found in many areas on the east coast of Australia and you are fairly likely to see them flying over your heads on the Six Foot Track. These birds are about 60 centimetres long and are covered mostly in dark, brownish-black feathers with a short crest on their head. The birds have distinct yellow cheek feathers and a wide yellow band on the tail feathers, which is visible in flight. These cockatoos lay their eggs at the end of the year in nests built in vertical tree hollows. After about a month the eggs hatch and the birds tend to stay with their parents for about a year. The birds enjoy eating seeds from the eucalypts and the she-oaks so keep an eye out along the banks of the Coxs River and on Black Range for these magnificent birds.

2 Black Range Campsite to Coss River Campsite

Walk directions

1 From the information sign in front of Black Range Camping Ground, follow the dirt road gently uphill, initially keeping the campsite to your left. (For more information about Black Range camping ground refer to the previous walk on page 15.) After

about 100 metres you pass under some powerlines, then come to a clear, large, 5-way intersection marked with a *Six Foot Track* – *Black Range Camping Ground* sign pointing back down the road.

2 Turn right and follow the *Six Foot Track* sign uphill along the dirt road, keeping the pine forest to your left. After about 250 metres you come to a clear

3-way intersection marked with a 6't metal arrow post (on your left).

3 Turn right and walk downhill, away from the pine forest and towards the powerlines along the dirt road. The dirt road soon bends left and follows near the powerlines again for about 400 metres, where the road straightens out and continues downhill past an intersection with another trail (on your left), just at the edge of the clearing. About 25 metres later the road leads past the *Black Range Fire Trail* sign and continues for another 80 metres to a Y-intersection with a faint trail on the right.



About the Six Foot Track

A touch of history

The history of the Six Foot Track goes back millions of years, a long time before people and even dinosaurs walked this land. Without the geological events that led to the creation of Jenolan Caves, this track would never have been built. The geology also explains the grand topography of the mountains and the granite boulders scattered along the Coxs River. The following has been written to give you a feel for the land you are about to walk through – not just about how the track came to be, but also to give you a sense of the stewardship provided by the Gundungurra people and the other people who have come since.

Geological history

Geologists believe that the deep bedrock of the region was laid about 450 million years ago, and then flooded around 250 million years ago, as the sea inundated the area. The sea deposited sand, which hardened into the massive sandstone deposits that we associate with the Blue Mountains. As the area filled with sand, the water became shallower and the region became dotted with enormous swampy forests. These swamps led to the creation of the coal and shale deposits that are found in distinct layers throughout the Blue Mountains and the greater Sydney area.

There were apparently two significant volcanic eruptions in the Blue Mountains. The first of these occurred around 200 million years ago, as dinosaurs roamed the forests, and saw hundreds of volcanos and dykes carve out an entirely new landscape. The more recent volcanic event, 20 million years ago, saw an enormous lava flow (up to 60 metres deep) flow through the primitive landscape. This volcanic activity created some of the igneous rocks of the region: the granite that dominates the Coxs River valley, and the basalt extrusions which are also found through the mountains.

The region was then lifted by pressure deep below the surface, followed by a huge amount of erosion which removed much of the lava sheet from the Blue Mountains, leaving the basalt-capped mountains whilst allowing the deep sandstone gorges and canyons to be carved out by the creeks and rivers.

About the Six Foot Track

In 2006, Jenolan Caves was dated as 360 million years old by the CSIRO. This new discovery, suggesting the caves are much older than originally thought, may lead to a re-thinking of some of these dates, but what is a few million years between friends?

The Gundungurra people

There is plenty of evidence that the Megalong Valley and many of the areas around the Six Foot Track have been inhabited and cared for by the Gundungurra people for around 20 000 years. The Gundungurra people knew of Jenolan Caves and called it “Binoomea”, meaning “hole” or “dark places”. Archaeological evidence suggests that the Six Foot Track was built on routes used by the Gundungurra people, including sections along the Cocks River and the Black Range.

There are Aboriginal archaeological sites along the Six Foot Track that are not publicly promoted in an effort to protect them. Unfortunately some of these sites were disturbed in 2012 when Glen Chee and Black Range roads were upgraded.

The Gundungurra are well known for their practice of burying their dead in an upright position. Some particularly important people were also wrapped in bark and placed inside a tree hollow. Along with many others, the Gundungurra were badly affected by flu and other disease outbreaks. There was a particularly bad flu epidemic in 1846, killing many people.

Jenolan Caves

James McKeown, an alleged bushranger, is likely to have been the first European to visit Jenolan Caves, but the first documented visit was by James Whalan in 1838, when he and his brother were searching for Mr McKeown. James and his brother Charles explored some of the caves in the area, then in 1866 the caves were put under direct government control and Jeremiah Wilson was appointed caretaker of a few caves the following year. Unfortunately there was a lot of damage done to the cave formations and decorations in this time until 1872, when it became illegal to damage the caves, thanks to the legislation tabled by John Lucas.

In 1880 the caves started becoming a popular tourist destination, with the name “Jenolan” adopted in 1884. Caves House was built in 1898 and has been extended several times since. As the caves grew more popular, the slow and difficult access became an issue. Many people

About the Six Foot Track

came via a steam train from Sydney to Tarana Railway Station, and then travelled by horse and buggy along the rough coach road to the caves. The total journey could take 24 hours.

Today, the Caves are a thriving tourist destination, and the journey from Sydney takes only 3 hours by car. There are several guided tours daily, as well as kids' holiday activities and music performances inside the caves. Visit www.jenolancaves.org.au or phone 1300 763 311 for more information.



The Six Foot Track

"[The track is] steep in places, but the romantic beauty of the surroundings amply compensates for the roughness of the ground."
Blue Mountains Railway Tourist Guide, 1894

At the end of March 1884, a government-led expedition set off to find and mark a route, suitable for horses, linking Katoomba to Jenolan caves. They started by following a steep pass off Narrow Neck, but then decided that Nellies Glen provided better access to the valley. It took the small team a total of 11 days to mark out the entire route from Explorers Tree, down Nellies Glen, across the Coxs River, along the Black Range and down to Jenolan Caves – a very impressive effort!

About the Six Foot Track

Jenolan Caves – Katoomba camping itineraries

Numbers shown in brackets indicate a walk waypoint. For example, 4(3) means Walk 4, waypoint 3.

Most common – 2 nights (3 days) tent camping

Days Plan	Km	Hrs	Walks
Jenolan Caves to Black Range	10	4.25	1
Black Range to Coxs River Optional luxury – Stay at 6FT Lodge	19	7.5	2
Coxs River to Explorers Tree	15.7	7.25	3 & 4

Weekend Trip – 1 night (2 days) tent camping

Days Plan	Km	Hrs	Walks
Jenolan Caves to Alum Creek	23	8.5	1 → 2 (11)
Alum Creek to Explorers Tree	21.8	9.5	2(11) → 3 & 4

No hurry, slow pace – 4 nights (5 days) tent camping.

Days Plan	Km	Hrs	Walks
Jenolan to Black Range	10	4.25	1
Black Range to Alum Creek	13	5	2 → 2(11)
Alum Creek to Cox River Optional luxury – Stay at 6FT Lodge	6.1	2.25	2(11) → end of 2
Coxs River to Old Ford Reserve	8	4	3 & alt route to OFR
Old Ford Reserve to Explorers Tree	8.7	4.25	Return to track- head & 4

(N.B. You have the option of staying at Jenolan Cottages to split the first day into two.)

Inn-to-inn walking

Walking inn-to-inn is very popular in parts of Europe; it is an overnight hike, with a few extra luxuries like a comfortable bed and a lighter pack. With a small amount of pre-planning you can walk the Six Foot Track in this style, staying in accommodation each night. This style of walking is not for everyone, but if you are reading this and thinking “that sounds nice”, then give it a go. Below you will find more information on the inns and some suggested itineraries. Inns will come and go and prices

About the Six Foot Track

will change; make sure you book and chat with your host ahead of time.

Inn-to-inn walking needs some planning and communication. In your day pack you will need to carry all the normal things for a remote area day walk and some extra food and a change of clothes for the evening. If you like even more luxury and less weight in your pack, chat with your host about dropping off a bag before the walk.

When talking with your host, please respect their time; we hope they can support walkers on the Six Foot Track for many years to come. When making a booking, discuss what meals you will need. For an extra fee your host may be able to help with dinner and breakfast, and maybe even organise a packed lunch for you. Where you need to be picked up, organise an approximate time, then call as you approach the trackhead. You will need a Telstra NextG or satellite phone to have any hope of making phone calls. Try hard to not keep your hosts waiting. As with all longer day walks you should be prepared for an unplanned night on the track in case things go wrong.

Accommodation options

Katoomba

There are lots of accommodation options in Katoomba – here are a few between the train station and Explorers Tree. Check online for many more accommodation providers in Katoomba.

Blue Mountains Backpacker

Clean, large and easygoing backpackers with a good kitchen and living area. Bed in dorm from \$20-\$30 per night, private rooms from \$79 per night.

144 Bathurst Road, Katoomba

T: (02) 4782 9630

Web: www.bluemountainsbackpackerhostel.com

The Flying Fox Backpackers

Smaller backpacker lodge, accommodation includes breakfast and internet. Dorm bed from \$28 per person per night. Tent sites available from \$19 per person per night.

190 Bathurst Rd, Katoomba

T: (02) 4782 4226

Web: www.theflyingfox.com.au

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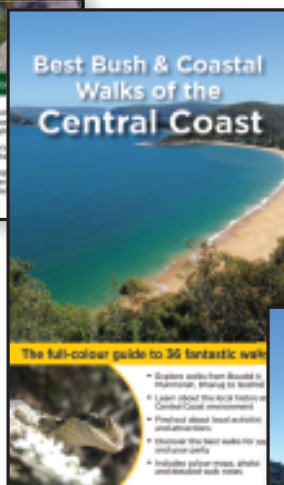
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