

Porters Pass

Location: Start at the end of Burton Rd, Blackheath

Duration: 2.5 hours

Grade: Hard

Features: Waterfalls, creek, canyon, lookouts,

Trip Notes:

The shrill cries of Black Cockatoos resonate as we admire the view from the start of this walk at Burton Rd. Well sign-posted, we enter the track and follow the signs to Porters Pass. Whip bird calls echo from the valley below, the loud wattle bird sings in the tree nearby while chirping honeyeaters dart past. The path descends past bright orange heath banksias and soon becomes steeper as we go down rock steps, past gnarled trees and zig-zag through hanging swamps. Before long the track narrows surrounded by heath becoming quite eroded and wet, but eventually opens out to a beautiful view ahead. We see the swirls of scattered rocky knolls in the distance and before long come to a sign pointing to a lookout. A short sandy overgrown track takes us to one of the knolls, its ridges and textures provide a lovely view point. A little plaque says this is “Logan’s Rest”.

Back on the main track we continue ahead past the sign which points to Porters Pass and Collier’s Causeway. The uneven, narrow path descends around the rocky lookout and we soon hear the sound of water below. A narrow set of stone steps takes us down to a pretty creek flowing through a wide, sheltered, canyon-like gap. The water looks crystal clear and is surrounded by lush ferns and mossy rocks, with towering, eroded sandstone walls above. Crossing the creek we step through a gap between two moss covered trees and follow the trail around a corner to an impressive view ahead where a flock of honeyeaters rise out of the valley below. This path goes to a great viewpoint before descending a steep flight of old rock steps winding down the escarpment. We cross a watercourse, and continue past ferns, mossy logs and trees to come to a slippery section before a waterfall. This lovely waterfall runs down layers of orange and black rock with a fascinating old bath carved into it, the clear flowing water filling it.

Crossing over this waterfall, a sign tells us that we have come to the end of Porter’s Pass and the start of Collier’s Causeway. This section of track is now drier and hugs the imposing bluff wall. It is rocky, uneven and tricky in sections but we get spectacular views, as we see the track ahead hugging the cliff wall. The rugged path continues for some time beside the towering orange cliff face – it is rough and narrow, and passes through boggy sections of hanging swamp. Though it is difficult going, breathtaking views of the Kanimbla Valley are to the right, and a quiet peacefulness pervades the bush.

Eventually we come to a flight of stone steps under an overhang, its orange hues contrasting with the deep blue of the sky above. Eucalypt trees wave in the breeze as we ascend the steps to the sandy bottomed overhang where a colony of native bees has made their home. Passing by quietly so as not to disturb them, we enjoy this place and the glowing light reflecting off the walls above. From here the rocky track is now drier and not as eroded as before, with leaf litter scattered about.

A flat rock overlooking the valley farms below provides a good spot for a break – here a Rosella lands in the tree nearby while Eastern Spinebills flit around us. As the track starts to ascend slowly, we see Walls Ledge opposite, lit by the sun, with rock climbers half way up the sheer cliff face. We approach a sheltered overhang and a sign pointing to Centennial Glen where there is a difficult waterfall to cross, possibly too hard to do when there is a lot of water. An arrow on the rock tells us the way to go and we now follow the narrow rock steps up the cliff face beside the flowing water of Slippery Dip Waterfall. At the top a sign pointing to “canyon” takes us on a short detour to The Grotto – a beautiful picturesque little canyon, where you need to scramble on your knees under a rock ledge to get to the best viewing spot.

We continue on our walk, ascending and following the well marked signs to Centennial Glen and also to Fort Rock and Bundarra St exit. The path winds its way behind a small veil of water, past patches of hanging swamp and yellow heath banksias and soon approaches a cavernous area where we walk behind a waterfall that splashes onto black jagged rocks. We approach an overhang where there is a section of old writing which is hard to make out – possibly graffiti from decades ago, and another cavern containing thick green ferns is passed before coming to a long ascent of steep stone steps. This stone staircase is lined with ferns and there are some eroded parts before we get to a rocky outcrop giving windswept views over the heath covered hills. We continue straight ahead along the sandy track following the sign to Bundarra St exit, sighting houses and civilisation on the hill opposite. After a couple of boggy sections we soon come to a lovely picnic area with a little cascading waterfall upstream. There are the remains of an old picnic table and the trees form an archway over the creek, which we cross. The track ascends past flowering heath fuscias and huge silvery gum trees to eventually get to Bundarra St. A 15 minute road walk from here takes us back to the start.

By Dilshara Hill