

## Cox's Cave

**Location:** This is a round trip which starts at the lookout at Mount Piddington in Mount Victoria. Mount Piddington adjoins highest point in the Blue Mountains plateau (One Tree Hill) and can be reached via Mount Piddington Rd.

**Duration:** 1.5 hrs

**Grade:** Medium – Hard

**Features:** Cave, Views, Waterfall, Creek, Grotto, Overhangs

### Trip Notes:

The long steel ladder was slippery and the climb was unnerving but reaching Cox's Cave made it worth the effort. What a huge majestic cave this was, way up on the side of the cliff face, the enormous cavity yielding a spread of ferns with ledges along the side walls that allowed us to tip toe out to the edge and take in the view of the valley beneath.

We started this walk at Mount Piddington, and although numerous walks start at this point, the one to Cox's Cave was well signposted. This track down from Mount Piddington zigzags along a stony path – at the first junction follow the left track signposted "Cox's cave circuit", and at the next junction also go left where it's signposted "Cox's Cave circuit via Grotto". (We will be returning via the path on the right). Descending gradually, soon the vegetation starts to change from the drier woodland of flowering shrubs, to ferns and leaf litter covering mossy green logs. Before long, we enter an interesting arched canopy formed by skinny tree trunks enshrouding an enormous log covered in brilliant green moss. Over the log, the mossy lined path takes us past large boulders and out into more open vegetation with purple trigger plants lining the track, "pagoda" rock formations towering opposite and the creek running by. Continuing down some stone slabs and steps carved in the rock with lots of bark and leaf litter around, soon brought us to a long row of moss covered picturesque steps which lead to the grotto below.

The grotto is aptly named – a little fairyland of rocks and ferns around a clearing and the cascading waterfall which tumbles into the creek below. Large mossy boulders and the remains of an old fire place also carpeted in the bright green moss make this is nice spot for a break at the old picnic table there.

The track continues to get even prettier from here - the creek winds its way beside us and lovely sets of old stone steps amongst the ferns and rich vegetation lead us to a small creek crossing where an old sign overhead points in the direction to Cox's Cave. A few more steps get us to an old wooden bridge – this bridge is actually at a junction which isn't obvious at first since it's not signposted. Even though the bridge looks inviting our walk today does not go across it (although if you want to do a short 30 minute detour this path leads to the picnic area at Fairy Bower and the old historic toll house at Mt Victoria). To continue on to Cox's Cave, step down onto the bridge and then you will see the track continuing on the right. Don't cross the bridge but instead veer right, where the track gets damper with more vegetation, ferns and overhangs. Although it's slippery it's very appealing.

Eventually we emerge out of the dampness - an enormous crevice on our left towers above and a shaft of light beams through, and on our right is a view through trees of the cliff faces across the valley. The track soon opens out leading to an amazing cliff ledge - the walls opposite are lit up in the afternoon sun and the view is spectacular. The path hugs the cliff wall going around an unusually shaped overhang and as we turned around the corner we got our first sighting of Cox's Cave – the huge dark cavity up above in the cliff face opposite.

The path again becomes more sheltered and ferns and moss once again surround us although the cliff walls are still nearby. Finally we get to the ladder – it's a sturdy steel ladder although quite long, steep and slippery and not recommended for the faint hearted. This is a way to Cox's Cave - once you make it to the top of the ladder, climb up onto the damp ledge and head left following a faint path. There is a short climb to the entrance of the steep and enormous cave, where you can explore and enjoy this fascinating place before facing the climb back down the ladder which is even trickier.

The track continues from here to make its way back up the escarpment past more mossy logs, ferns and fallen trees. It is steep in some parts and there is a lot of leaf litter about making it slippery and sometimes indistinct. Look for sections of old stone steps and the occasional orange square marker nailed up onto trees to show the way. There are more steps, logs to climb over, fallen trees to go under and a carpeting of leaf litter to negotiate but you will know you're on the right track when you climb over the rocks with arrows carved onto them.

Finally the track opens out into a stand of stringy barks and eventually leads to a rocky outcrop. The track here is again unclear – head left from the rocky outcrop and look for the orange markers up in the trees and also for the occasional carved step along the path which has now opened up into drier vegetation with flowering wattle and gnarled banksias. Soon we get to the signpost to Mount Piddington which re-joins the zigzags at the start of the walk. It's only short climb up to Mount Piddington and a well-earned break at this beautiful lookout.