

Magdala Gully & Wiggins Track

Location: Start at Picnic Point Reserve at the end of Valley Rd in Springwood.

Duration: 4 hours

Grade: Moderate - Hard

Features: waterfalls, creeks, pools, overhangs

Trip Notes:

We enter into a world of ferns under the tall canopy of trees after descending the stone steps from Picnic Point. The air is cool and crisp, and we cross a bridge over a trickling creek before turning right, following the sign to Perch Ponds. Upon reaching the next sign board, we at first don't see our track until we realise that we must descend down carved steps beside a small waterfall. We are following Magdala Creek and the track is relatively flat but soggy in places.

Soon we cross the creek among some rock pools and continue along the leaf littered path beside damp logs shrouded in ferns. A whip bird calls in the bush nearby and the pretty creek gently flows along the smooth rock bed. Crossing a bridge above a small waterfall flowing over the orange rocks, we continue round green mossy boulders and under some fallen trees. A peaceful silence pervades the bush and we hear the sweet tweets of birds in the air.

The vegetation becomes drier as we walk through thick undergrowth before getting to a sign pointing towards Perch Ponds. On the left is a pleasant view over the creek but we follow the damp leaf littered path which swings to the right and continues past small overhangs and more mossy rocks. A gentle descent takes us to a large flat rock where we step down to walk along the creek bed and cross beside the crystal clear cool water.

The path meanders through pretty bush past cavernous rock shelters, crossing the creek again before we climb over the damp and beautifully patterned surface of a huge log. The dappled sunlight warms the air as we walk through more thick undergrowth. New Holland Honeyeaters dart amongst the old banksias while new yellow wattle is emerging. At times our view of the creek is obscured and at other times we walk right next to the cool water – often we see waratahs here in spring. As we walk we catch glimpses of the beautiful birds which flit about, we hear the frogs croaking near the larger pools of water, and come across a fascinating lyrebird imitating other birdcalls. We cross the creek a few times along this section of track, sometimes having to look more closely for evidence of steps or a footpad to find the track on the other side. Along the way we pass impressively large turpentine trees and pretty pools with the occasional footpad leading to quiet spots beside the soothing creek.

Following a sign pointing right towards Perch Ponds, we reach a long sheltered section, the creek flowing between towering eroded rock shelves. Soon we get to another crossing over the wide creek bed which is a delightful spot for a lunch break. Clusters of ferns are scattered over the rocky base and streams of water form a glassy cascade into the pool below - maybe this is the Blue Pool mentioned on the topographical map? The path leads down to a sandy beach at this little oasis where there is a little waterfall into the glimmering pool surrounded by lush ferns.

We continue past a large rock shelter and soon hear Magdala Falls, dropping into the wide pool below, yet we only catch a glimpse of this waterfall surrounded by shiny dark rock walls. The main track then continues past green ferns and fallen logs, sandy overhangs and clear pools to get to Martin Falls. After glimpsing the stream running over an unusual ledge, the soggy path takes us down to the base where thin strands of water run into a deep pool.

We travel beside a cliff face and then slowly descend, getting closer to the mossy boulders in the dry creek bed while a fat Wonga pigeon noisily takes flight as we reach Perch Ponds. This clearing at the junction of tracks is an engrossing area to explore, with its bubbling creek, large boulders and gnarled trees. We meet other walkers as we take the right branch, alongside Glenbrook Creek. The sound of rushing water is nearby and we catch glimpses of lovely clear pools with their sandy bottomed base, some quite large and easy to reach. The undulating path travels past eroded rock walls, mossy green rocks and budding ferns. Tall stands of Turpentine and Sassafras dot the landscape and gnarled trees and vines form an enchanting environment. Birds dart in the dappled sunlight and there are more eroded rock hollows and fallen trees to negotiate, before we reach a special place – a large swimming hole at the junction of Glenbrook and Sassafras Creeks, where the clear cool water is surrounded by sandy banks and rock ledges with trees draping over the edges. The walk continues over a slippery crossing to get to a clearing where a fascinating eroded creek bed can be seen, its potholed base scattered with colourful shiny orange and white pebbles. Across the clearing the track now follows Sassafras Creek where care has to be taken not to lose the path as we go around a large fallen tree. After crossing a small creek beside an old gnarled tree, the track with its mossy rocks, boulders and hanging vines gets to a fork. A sign points to Wiggins Track and Yondell Ave and we follow the arrows, crossing the creek over a wooden bridge laid over a large boulder.

A sign tells us we are now at Sassafras Gully Reserve and we follow the path, clamouring over some roots before turning right to start the 700m ascent. Lovely rock steps lead up the hill next to a watercourse, and wind up past ferns to a large eroded overhang, with its striking patterns. The track is unclear here and easy to lose - it continues to the eroded rock wall and then up a ledge on the right. We ascend beside small pools of water trickling down layers of rock before we reach a pretty section of stone steps beside a small waterfall. The vegetation gradually gets drier with loose leaf litter and bark across the trail, before crossing a bridge and travelling through more open forest into the sunlit path. Tall skinny trunks of Eucalyptus are scattered about and Grevilleas and bright yellow Egg and Bacon flowers are freshly blooming. The somewhat eroded rocky path climbs up some ledges before exiting at Yondell Rd, where it is a half hour street walk back to the start.