



Lake St Clair DAY WALKS

A walk to Shadow Lake, Little Hugel or Mt Rufus takes in beautiful alpine landscapes and glacial lakes.

Mt Rufus has significance for Aboriginal people because a type of rock (cherty hornfels) used for hand tools, is found here. It continues to be an important area for today's Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

Note: There are no shelter huts on any of the walks. Record your walk details in the log book at the visitor centre and sign out when you have finished your walk.

Walks	Time (hours)	
Cynthia Bay to Mt Rufus	5 hrs return	15km
Mt Rufus Circuit	7 hrs return	18.5km
Cynthia Bay to Shadow Lake	3-4 hrs return	13km
Cynthia Bay to Shadow Lake and Little Hugel	6 hrs return	18km
Cynthia Bay-Shadow Lake Circuit	4-5 hrs	15km

Cynthia Bay to Mt Rufus

5 hours (15 km) return, 680 m climb. Steep in places, suitable for families with older children.

This walk is the most direct way to approach Mt Rufus from Cynthia Bay. Start at the visitor centre and follow the Watersmeet Nature Walk through the peppermint gum forest (*Eucalyptus amygdalina*) until you come to the Mt Rufus summit track junction. From here it is about 7½ km to the summit.

As the altitude increases vegetation changes from eucalypt forest to patches of cool-temperate rainforest in the gullies. As you climb higher, the vegetation changes again to sub-alpine forest, dominated by snow gums (*Eucalyptus coccifera*) and stunted rainforest.

Alpine plant communities dominate nearer the summit. During late spring and early summer they provide a colourful display of fragrant flowers. In clear weather the summit (1,416 m) gives views of Frenchmans Cap and Mt Gell to the west, and the King William Range to the south. Return to Cynthia Bay is via the same route.



Mt Rufus Circuit

(Cynthia Bay – Mt Rufus – Shadow Lake – Cynthia Bay)
7 hours (18.5 km) return, 680 m climb. Steep in places, suitable for families with older children.

This circuit includes the Mt Rufus summit as well as alpine lakes, wind sculptured sandstone formations, extensive views across to the headwaters of the Franklin River, and the opportunity to walk through alpine meadows and sub-alpine pandani communities.

From the summit of Mt Rufus descend the ridge line north towards Mt Hugel. Below the summit is an area of wind and rain sculptured sandstone. These rocks are almost 300 million years old and once formed a continuous layer across most of Tasmania. About 165 million years ago magma intruded up through the sandstone to form dolerite, which covered the sandstone layer. Both layers have been eroded over time by wind, rain, snow and glacial action.

Below the saddle between Mt Rufus and Mt Hugel the track winds through Richea Valley, named for the pandani and scoparia plants that grow here. These plants belong to the Richea genus. The beautiful colours of the summer-flowering scoparia include reds, pinks, yellows and whites.

Descend through rainforest, buttongrass moorlands and snow gum forest to Shadow Lake. From here follow the track back to Cynthia Bay.

Cynthia Bay to Shadow and Forgotten Lakes

3-4 hours (13 km) return, 220 m climb. Moderate grade. Suitable for younger children with bushwalking experience.

Follow the Watersmeet Nature Walk to Watersmeet where the Cuvier and Hugel Rivers meet. Turn left and follow the signposted track to Shadow Lake. The track winds through rainforest and across a bridge over the Hugel River.

As you leave the valley you enter a forest dominated by gum-topped stringybarks (*Eucalyptus delegatensis*). A fire here many years ago disturbed the understorey vegetation. Rainforest species, including myrtles, are slowly establishing themselves here. During November and December the native waratah can be seen with its bright red, nectar-laden flowers.

Near Shadow Lake the vegetation changes to sub-alpine forest. Snow gums, buttongrass and sedges flourish and pencil pines fringe the lake edge. The lake contains introduced brown and rainbow trout. These can be fished if you have a licence. Picnic spots can be found around the lake edge but please remember that campfires are not permitted. Forgotten Lake is approximately 20 minutes from Shadow Lake mostly walking along



Pencil pines at Shadow Lake

raised boardwalks. You may notice large, round cushion plants between the two lakes. They are made up of hundreds or thousands of separate tiny plants. Even though they look hardy they are very fragile, so please avoid walking on them.

Cynthia Bay to Shadow Lake and Little Hugel

6 hours (18 km) return, 440 m climb. Grade - Difficult. Muddy track, boots and gaiters recommended. (Involves boulder scrambling)

Follow the directions to Shadow Lake above. At Shadow Lake take the Hugel Track past Forgotten Lake. From the lake the track is sometimes wet and muddy. The track turns uphill through a forest of pandani, myrtle, deciduous beech and snow gums. The last section of the track is steep, up across a cairned route on boulders and scree to the summit.

From the summit (1,274 m) there is a panoramic view of Lake St Clair and several mountain peaks, including Olympus, Byron and Hugel.

Shadow Lake Circuit

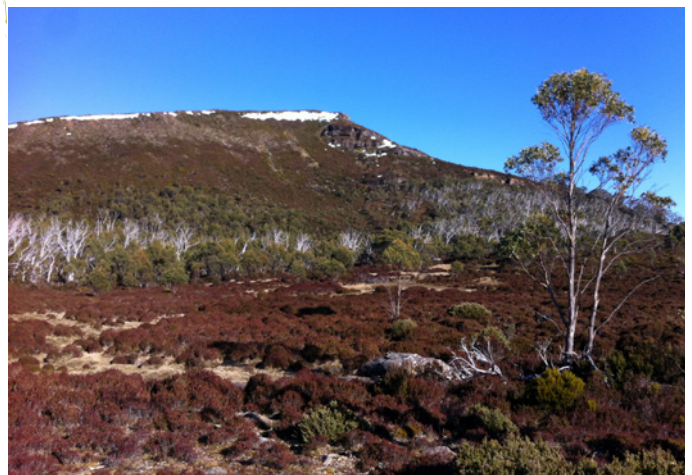
4-5 hrs (15km) return, 330m climb. Moderate grade. Suitable younger children with bushwalking experience.

This track can be walked in either direction. Clockwise, the route will be steeper uphill, gentler downhill. Clockwise, follow the Watersmeet Nature Walk and turn left at the Mt Rufus track junction.

The vegetation near Shadow Lake is subalpine with snow gums, buttongrass and flourishing sedges. Pencil pines fringe the lake edges. Camping is available along the eastern shoreline and on the beach on the eastern shore of Shadow Lake. Remember that campfires are not permitted. From the lake follow the track across a plateau past a small pond and then head downhill through the forest to return to Cynthia Bay.

What you need to take

Weather conditions can change quickly. Snow, hail, and strong winds can occur at any time. Warm and waterproof clothing should always be carried including gloves and hat. Sturdy walking boots are best but walking shoes will suffice in dry weather conditions on the Shadow Lake Mt Hugel and Mt Rufus tracks.



Mt Rufus

Photos by Andrea Stanley