



# Leeaberra Track

## DOUGLAS-APSLEY NATIONAL PARK

The Leeaberra Track was named after the Aboriginal word for the Douglas River. It traverses approximately 28 kms of the beautiful Douglas-Apsley National Park with its spectacular waterfalls, swimming in natural pools, dry sclerophyll forests, rainforest and magnificent views over the East Coast.

The walk usually takes around two and a half days to complete, depending on the amount of time spent swimming, relaxing or exploring on side trips.

The Leeaberra Track is a good introduction to overnight walking in Tasmania due to the relatively mild weather and moderate grade. However, the track is not always easy to follow, and the safety and environmental advice in this notesheet should still be heeded.

### Getting there

Thompsons Marshes in the north of the park is the starting point for the Leeaberra Track proper. To reach Thompsons Marshes from Hobart, travel 24 km north from Bicheno on the Tasman Highway A3 and turn left (west) just after crossing Stonyford Creek onto the 'E road'. From Launceston, travel to St Marys via the A4 highway, then take the A3 and travel for about 16 km until the Forestry E Road is reached. Follow the privately owned, unmaintained 'E road' for 2 km to where the bridge is out. Unless you are driving a high clearance 4WD vehicle, you will need to continue along this road on foot, following the signs for a further 5.5 km to Thompsons Marshes carpark.

The Leeaberra Track should only be walked north to south to stop the spread of the killer plant fungus *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which has infested much of the track south of the Douglas River Crossing.

Walkers should take two cars or arrange a lift back to their starting point as no buses travel to the area and the presence of *Phytophthora* prevents a return walk.

### Essential items

Even though the Douglas-Apsley National Park has a mild climate, walkers should still be prepared for cold, rainy days at any time of the year. Warm waterproof clothing, proper equipment and adequate preparation are essential. For more details, obtain a copy of 'Before You Walk'.

Hot, dry days can occur at any time of year. Take a hat, sunscreen and a bottle full of water. A map is also essential, and the Douglas-Apsley Map and Notes is strongly recommended.

### Fees

Entry fees apply to all National Parks. Passes are valid for all National Parks and are available from all major park centres, Travel and Visitor Information centres. All money raised goes directly towards the maintenance and protection of Tasmania's National Parks.

### Use the walker log book

For your safety please record your trip intentions in the log book (near Thomsons Marshes). Your entry may save your life should you become lost or overdue. However, the books are not checked regularly and a search will only be mounted if someone else reports you as being overdue. So, leave details of your trip with a reliable friend or relative.

Accurate log book information also provides the statistical basis for proper management of the area. Please remember to sign out at the end of your walk.

### Phytophthora

The root rot fungus, *Phytophthora cinnamomi* is a major problem in the park. It is transported from one place to another in soil and water, killing plants as it goes. To help stop its spread:

- Start walking with clean boots, gaiters and tent pegs.
- Walk the Leeaberra Track from north to south only. Do not return to the northern end of the park if walking further than Nichols Cap.
- Stay on marked tracks and on the campsites mentioned overleaf to prevent infecting new areas.
- Wash your gear before starting another walk to stop the spread to other areas.
- Spread the word, not the fungus!

### The track

Two types of markers have been used to identify this track. Small orange triangles have been used for the main track and small yellow triangles have been used for the side tracks. To avoid becoming lost when the track is hard to follow, make sure that you can see the next track marker before moving on.

The track is of easy to moderate grade for the most part. However, extra care should be taken when crossing the Douglas and Apsley rivers (see 'Flooded rivers') and when walking around Heritage Falls and Nichols Cap.

Due to algal growth, some rocks in the rivers become extremely slippery when wet. Side routes along river beds should be avoided if rocks are wet.

### Day 1

(Please note that the first day is 5.5km longer since the closure of the bridge on the 'E road'. See "From Thompsons Marsh" note above.) From Thompsons Marshes walk to the first (northern) junction with the Rainforest Ledge loop track. Continue on above the junction to Heritage Falls campsite (on the northern bank of the Douglas River). Allow 2 ½ hours. For a side trip (45 min return) rockhop downstream to Heritage and Leeaberra Falls where there are great swimming pools. Take care climbing down to these pools.

### Day 2

Heritage Falls campsite to Lookout Hill (southern junction of Rainforest Ledge track), 1 ½ hours. From Lookout Hill take a side track down over the ridge to the Rainforest Ledge 1 – 2 hours return. This track is relatively well marked with yellow triangles.

From Lookout Hill continue on to Nichols Cap track junction, 45 min. The side track to Nichols Cap offers spectacular views of the park over the Douglas River valley and east coast, 40 min return.

Nichols Cap track junction to Douglas River crossing, 1 ½ hours. This track is overgrown and scrubby in places and involves a steep descent. Camp on the southern bank of the river.

### Day 3

Douglas River to the end of the old exploration road (steepish climb), 2 ½ hours. Follow the track from the end of the exploration track to the southern crossing of the Denison Rivulet (poorly marked) and on to Mount Andrew saddle. Continue on to the Apsley River Waterhole, 3 ½ hours.

## Camping

There are no huts along this track, so a tent and sleeping bag must be carried. Good campsites are available at Heritage Falls, the Douglas River Crossing (south bank) and the Apsley Waterhole. Campsites are limited in all other locations due to the stony ground and lack of water.

Please leave campsites cleaner than you found them and be prepared to carry your rubbish out with you as there are no bins.

## Water

In dry weather there is no water available between Heritage Falls and the Douglas River Crossing (a full days walk with some steep sections). Water should always be carried for this section. Drinkable water is normally available on the rest of the track.

Do your bit to keep the water supplies clean by washing 50 m away from streams and by avoiding even biodegradable soaps and detergents — a pot scourer is sufficient. Also, don't throw food scraps into streams.

## Flooded rivers

The Douglas and Apsley Rivers are both subject to flooding following high rainfall and there are no bridges. **When the rivers are flooded, do not attempt to cross them.** The best alternative is to camp and wait for the rivers to subside. Otherwise simply turn back. It is wise to carry extra food in case of such days.

## Walk softly

To help keep the Leeaberra Track from becoming degraded, walk through bogs, rather than around them. To limit the social and environmental pressure on campsites, keep your party size to between four and six people.

## Animals

Feeding animals such as wallabies and possums can result in them becoming a nuisance around campsites and contracting diseases such as lumpy jaw. Please look and admire, but do not feed the wildlife.

## Toilets

The only toilet along the track is a pit toilet at the Apsley Waterhole. In other areas, walk 100 m away from watercourses and campsites and dig a 15 cm hole with a small hand trowel (you should always carry one of these). Bury waste with soil so animals won't dig it up and spread disease.

## Fires

The potential for bushfires in the Douglas-Apsley National Park is very high due to its dry vegetation. Open fires are not permitted in the park from 1 October to 30 April. Walkers must carry and use fuel stoves during these months and their use is strongly recommended at all other times.

## Further information

*Before You Walk: Tasmania's Essential Bushwalking Guide and Trip Planner*, available from most Parks and Wildlife Service Offices, and on-line at [www.parks.tas.gov.au](http://www.parks.tas.gov.au).

Douglas-Apsley Map and Notes, available from Service Tasmania shops, and from selected retail outlets.

Contact: National Park Visitor's Centre Freycinet