

# THE OVERLAND TRACK

## Tasmania – Lake St Clair

### *Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair*



Travel through the heart of Tasmania's World Heritage-listed wilderness on this famous 65-kilometre (40.4 miles) trek from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair. Walk the entire Overland Track in six days or do short and day walks from the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre and Dove Lake. Remember the end-to-end walk requires planning. You'll need to book in advance with Tasmania's Parks & Wildlife Service and take with you a good tent and warm sleeping bag. While the route

has eight basic stove-heated huts, there's no guarantee of space. The best time to walk the track is between November and April, when the weather is milder and days are longer for Daylight Saving. During April, you can see the spectacular changing colours of the deciduous beech. As well as a physical challenge, this walk is a true communion with nature. You'll see lakes, forests and gorges, mountains and moors, spectacular waterfalls and steep, stony peaks.

#### AT A GLANCE



- › Ronny Creek carpark – Waterfall Valley – 10km (6.2 miles)
- › Waterfall Valley – Lake Windermere – 8km (5 miles)
- › Lake Windermere – Pelion Plains – 17km (10.6 miles)
- › Pelion Plains – Kia Ora – 9km (5.6 mile)
- › Kia Ora Hut – Windy Ridge – 10km (6.2 miles)
- › Windy Ridge – Lake St. Clair – 18km (11.2 miles)

#### DAY ONE

##### **RONNY CREEK CAR PARK TO WATERFALL VALLEY**

The first day is a 10km hike to the top of Cradle Mountain's craggy, impossibly imposing peaks. Start at Ronny Creek and do the moderate climb past Crater Falls and Crater Lake to Marions Lookout. Otherwise the exposed track past Horse

Track to Crater Peak is a gentler ascent. You can also start walking at Dove Lake and meander upwards past Lake Lilla and Wombat Pool to Marions Lookout. This is a great place to stand and contemplate the silent, mirrored waters of Dove Lake. Continue along the Cradle Mountain plateau and scramble over dolerite rocks to the 1,500 metre (4,921 feet) summit. Walk

around the glacial cirque, from where you can take a right turn off the track to explore rugged Barn Bluff. Descend through the highlands, looking out for wallabies and possums in the trees, button grass plains and herb meadows. End your day in moss-carpeted Waterfall Valley, in the no-frills comfort of Barn Bluff Hut or beneath some canvass in one of the many campsites.

**DAYS TWO TO FOUR**
**WATERFALL VALLEY TO LAKE WINDERMERE**

Wake to clean mountain air and the happy warble of native birds such as karrowong and yellow throated wattle. This 8km (5 miles) section takes around three hours, giving you plenty of time to soak up the scenery. From Waterfall Valley, the trail heads south across sedgeland moors dotted with pandani bushes, eucalyptus trees and rare pencil pines, some up to 1,000 years old. Take a scenic lunch break at Lake Will, then stroll to Innes Falls at the lake's southern end. Turn off at Lake Holmes and head across the button grass plains to tea-coloured Lake Windermere. After a refreshing swim, you could walk to Forth Valley lookout for a view over the fragrant, green Lemonthyme Forests. Settle for the night in Windermere Hut. Look at the brilliant star-scattered sky and listen to the scampering of shy, nocturnal possums.

**LAKE WINDERMERE TO PELION PLAINS**

Get ready for a 17km (10.6 miles) walk across the moorlands and mountains. Stop at Forth River Lookout for views over the river's glacial valley and the giant eucalypt forest around it. From Pine Forest Moor, the route winds past gnarled, moss-covered forests, beneath the rocky overhang of Mt Pelion West. Lunch at Frog Flat, beneath the mountain's tall dolerite peaks. Here the headwaters of the Forth River cascade down into the Lemonthyme Valley. You'll mimic their direction as you descend through leatherwood, sassafras and myrtle rainforest, then alpine grasslands, to Pelion Plains. This section of the track follows the 1898 horse trail built to transport miners from eastern towns to mines on the West Coast. Marvel at the fluted Mount Oakleigh and super-sized wombats grazing on the grass. Then set up for the night in the most recently built Pelion Hut.

**PELION PLAINS TO KIA ORA**

Stare out over the soul-searing expanse of South-West wilderness before starting your 9km (5.6 miles) march past Pelion Gap to Kia Ora Hut. Pass through emerald forests and head up eucalypt-lined slopes to a clearing. From here you can see Cathedral Mountain, with Pelion East and Mount Ossa towering on either side of you. The experienced climber should have time for the three hour round trip climb to Mount Ossa, Tasmania's highest peak. The summit is a prime viewing platform for the southern section of the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair World Heritage Area. Travel down to Pinestone Valley past cushion plants, ancient pines and scoparia. Climb a small ridge to Kia Ora Hut, nestled beneath Cathedral Mountain.





## DAYS FIVE AND SIX

### KIA ORA HUT TO WINDY RIDGE

Today's 10km (6.2 miles) will take you four hours, plus any scenic detours off the path. Visit Leatherwood Garden and Du Cane hut, once the bush home of trapper Paddy Hartnett and his wife. Explore the surrounding Leatherwood forest, which is covered with large white flowers in late spring and summer. Meander south along the Mersey River, stopping to explore three of Tasmania's largest and most spectacular waterfalls: Ferguson, D'Alton and Hartnett. Ferguson Falls is named after a former ranger at Lake St. Clair, while Hartnett was also christened in honour of Paddy Hartnett – the eccentric bushman with the bowler hat. Pass through Du Cane

Gap and head down through dense myrtle forests, before reaching the U-shaped glacier of Windy Ridge. The large boulders at the entrance were shifted slowly down the valley during the last great ice age. After today's gentle 10km (6.2 miles) hike, pitch a tent or spend the night in Windy Ridge hut.

### WINDY RIDGE TO LAKE ST. CLAIR

Get ready for the final 18km (11.2 miles) of your trip, plus any side trips you want to squeeze in. Travel past open eucalypt forests and the grassy patch of the Bowling Green, from where you can see the summit of Mount Acropolis. Continue south into picturesque Pine Valley, beneath the mist-shrouded Du Cane Range. A bridge crossing

takes you to Cephissus Creek in a lush rainforest setting. From here you can climb to the top of Mount Acropolis to look down on Labyrinth and its elegant lakes. Or continue south, through dry sclerophyll forest and open button grass plains to Narcissus Hut on Lake St Clair. From here, your walk ends with a boat cruise on the southern hemisphere's deepest natural lake. Gliding away from the track, you can look back and marvel at the seemingly impenetrable mountains you've walked through.

### USEFUL LINKS

Prepare for this walk  
<http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=7771>