

New South Wales

When it comes to bushwalking, New South Wales (NSW) can rightly claim to be Australia's state of variety. Dotted around the state's 800,000-or-so square kilometres are several of the country's highest peaks, lush pockets of temperate and subtropical rainforest, volcanic remains, desert ranges, isolated beaches and gorge-scarred tableland. There's empty space aplenty and it's possible to walk through almost all of it.

On a crowded walkers' highlights reel, the cool upper reaches of Kosciuszko National Park probably grab top billing. Here are relatively easy walks in a usually well-watered region, under wide skies and with stunning views. The dense eucalypt forests and shady, plunging canyons of Blue Mountains National Park would probably run a close second. Especially as the 'Blues' are in an eponymously named World Heritage Area, and said area of world renown is right on the doorstep of Sydney, and Sydney is a jolly fine destination for walkers in its own right. North and south of the NSW capital are easy coastal walks through cliff top heathland of unrivalled beauty. From these ocean ramparts, you can gaze in silence at the tall towers of nearby Sydney with nothing but sea-eagles for company.

Of all the places to walk in NSW, the remarkable Warrumbungle Range might be the best in which to ponder NSW's diversity of terrain and experience. To the west of the 'Bungles stretch the tabletop plains of western NSW. East, a spur of the Liverpool Range bends back towards the Great Dividing Range, which includes the Blue Mountains, Kosciuszko Range and other distinctive walking destinations, such as the World Heritage-listed Barrington Tops and the rugged, hidden Budawang. Big state. Big choice. Get started.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Wandering past sandy beaches, beautiful wind-fretted rock formations and soaring cliffs of the Royal National Park on the **Coast Track** (p58)
- Exploring the World Heritage-listed landscapes of the **Blue Mountains** (p62) and **Kanangra-Boyd National Parks** (p80)
- Climbing Australia's highest peaks in **Kosciuszko National Park** (p88)
- Savouring solitude and the extraordinary rock formations of **Monolith Valley** (p101)
- Scaling the ridges surrounding the volcanic spires of the **Warrumbungles** (p110)

■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ www.visitnsw.com.au

■ www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

ENVIRONMENT

The Great Dividing Range dominates eastern NSW, running the length of the state and providing a key influence on climate, plant and animal distribution and human settlement. Most of the Great Dividing Range's ancient peaks have been worn down to a series of plateaus or tablelands, including the New England tableland, the Blue Mountains, the Southern Highlands and the Monaro Tablelands, most of which don't rise above 1200m to 1400m. By contrast, in the Snowy Mountains the high peaks top 2000m, culminating in Australia's highest point, Mt Kosciuszko (2228m). Here there's evidence of the last ice age in the moraines and lakes left by retreating glaciers.

East of the range, the coastal strip is (by Australian standards) heavily settled and much changed by human hand. To the west, the better watered and more productive agricultural lands on rolling land near the range give way to vast, empty, arid plains.

The walks in this chapter are concentrated in the ranges and coast, where there's generally a higher proportion of forested country and greater diversity of plant and animal life.

INFORMATION

When to Walk

For the most part NSW offers year-round walking conditions, with a few exceptions. Mid-winter snows generally prevent walking in Kosciuszko National Park, while high temperatures and lack of surface water can sometimes inhibit departures in certain parks (and even close some areas) in mid-summer. Generally, autumn and spring are the most popular seasons for walking.

Maps

If you're planning to do a lot of driving, take along the series of regional road maps by the National Roads & Motorist's Association (NRMA), which shows almost every road and track in the state, although not the topography. The descriptions of road conditions are accurate and up to date. You can order online (www.mynrma.com.au/maps_2.asp) or pick them up at NRMA offices – most will have the maps to their area and probably the whole set. They're free to members, and to the members of motoring organisations in other states.

The **NSW Department of Lands** (☎ 9228 6111; www.lands.nsw.gov.au), referred to as 'Lands', produces topographic maps at three scales – 1:25,000, which cover the coast and ranges; 1:50,000, for the western slopes and central region, and 1:100,000, for the far west. In the past, the state mapmaker has been known as Land & Property Information New South Wales (LPINSW) and Central Mapping Authority (CMA), and many Lands maps continue to be published under one of those imprints.

For maps covering individual walks, see Planning in the introduction to each walk.

BUYING MAPS

Sydney has the best range of maps (p52), available either in dedicated map shops or one of the many outdoor gear shops.

Books

For the most extensive coverage of the state's national parks, use the National Parks Association (NPA) guide in two volumes: *The NPA Guide to National Parks of Northern NSW* and *The NPA Guide to National Parks of Southern NSW*. Several walking books explore the state in fair depth. Tyrone Thomas's *120 Walks in New South Wales* and *70 Walks in Southern New South Wales* and the ACT are extremely useful. John and Lyn Daly's *Take a Walk in a National Park* series has four volumes covering NSW walks: *South-Eastern Zone*, *Blue Mountains*, *Sydney to Port Macquarie* and *Port Macquarie to Brisbane*.

Information Sources

Tourism NSW (☎ 13 2077; www.tourism.nsw.gov.au) is the NSW government's peak tourism body. Almost every major town (and many minor ones) has a tourist office with local information that's not readily available from the larger state organisation; those relevant to individual walks are listed in this chapter.

For information on NSW national parks and bushwalking organisations (all based in Sydney), see Information (p51).

Park Fees & Regulations

National park fees and camping regulations vary across NSW. Just under 50 of the state's 100-plus parks charge vehicle-entry fees, which vary from \$22 per day during the winter in Kosciuszko National