

WALKING THE ACT BORDER

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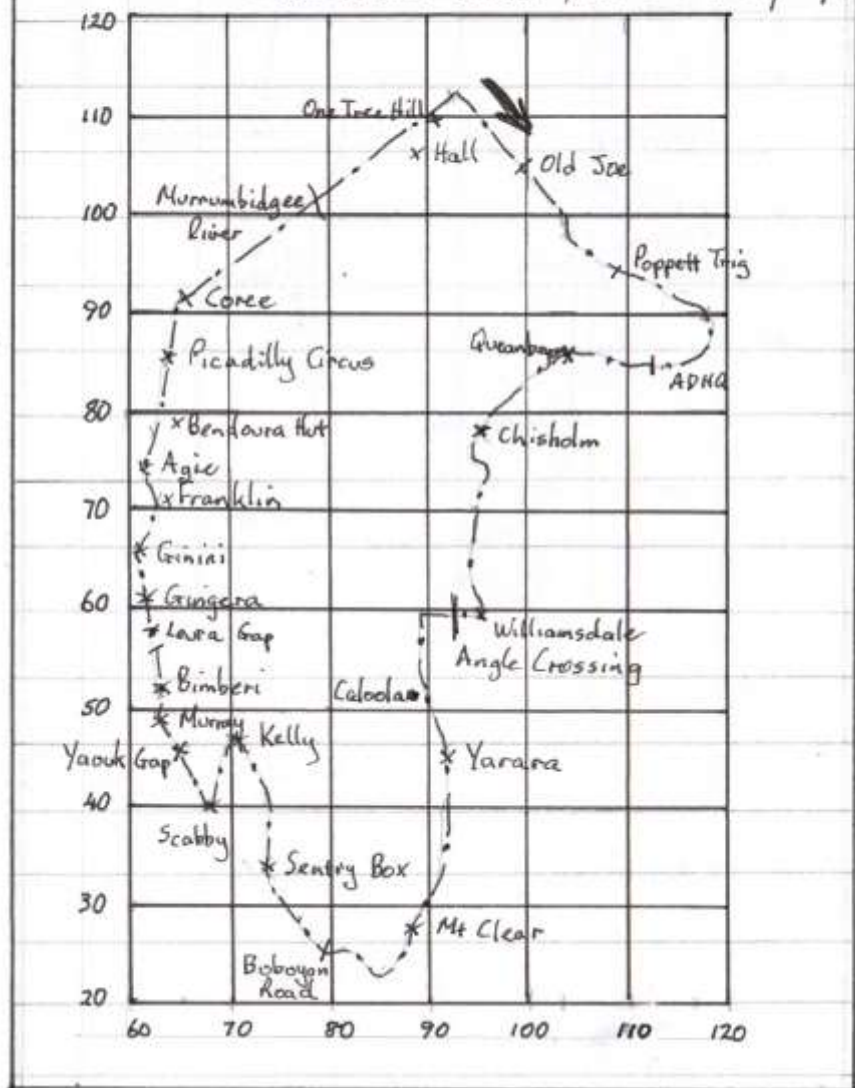
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Rob Horsfield

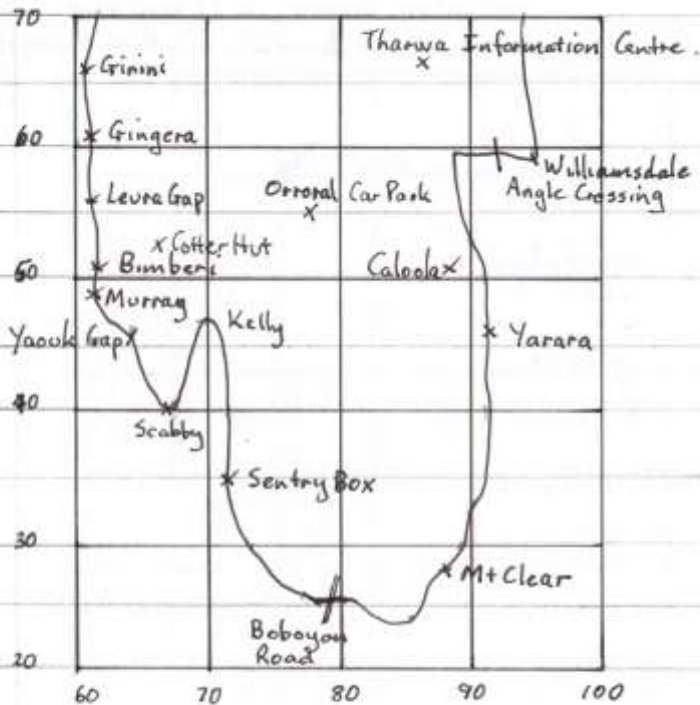
14 Jun 13

ACT Border Walks.

- the whole border, a 19 day trip
- the Southern Border, an 8 to 11 day trip.



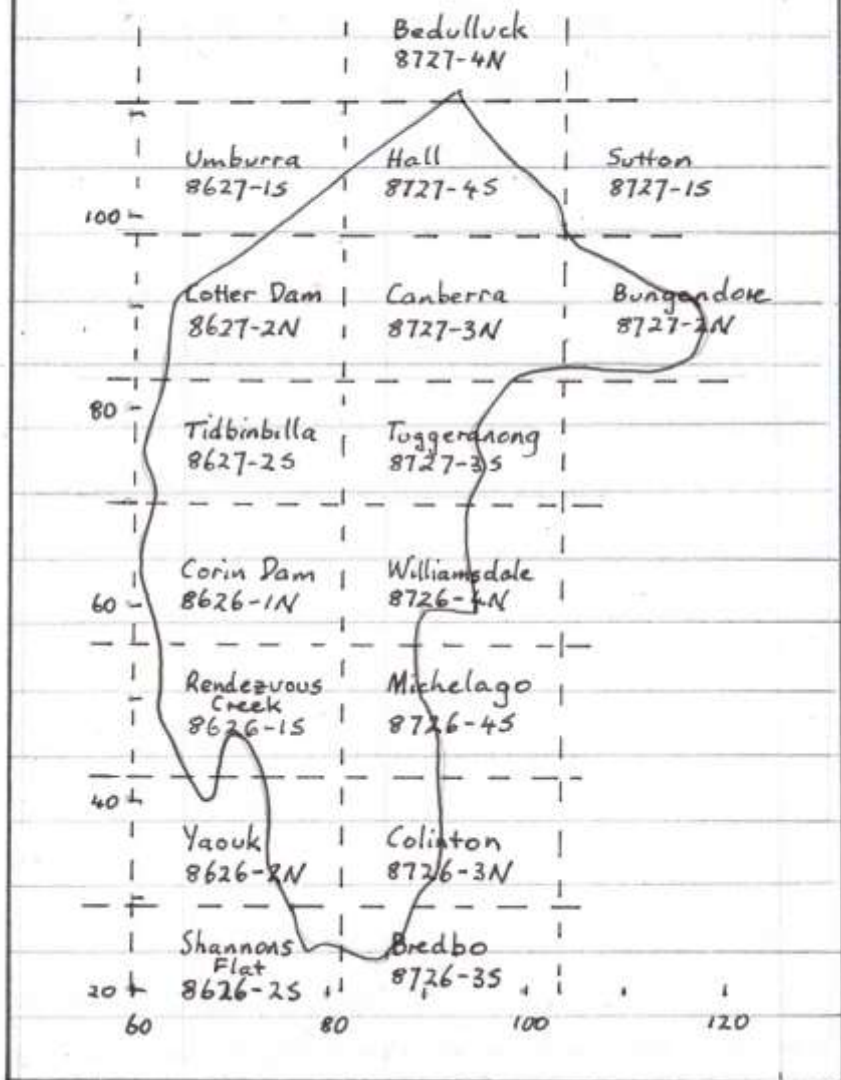
- Southern Border Walk



Options on length of trip. (days)

Start at	Finish at	Tharwa	Orroral	Corin Dam	Ginini car park
Tharwa		11	10	11	11
Caloola		10	9	10	10
Boboyan road		9	8	9	9

Maps: LPI Topographic & Orthophoto 1:25000
Second Edition, GDA 94.



The ACT Border as a Long-Distance Walk

Preamble

In eight trips over the period July 07 to April 13 the writer walked the ACT border. The thought in mind was whether it was suitable as a long-distance walk, possibly to be added to an Australian inventory of such. This booklet provides two suggestions: the whole border on a 19 day schedule and a southern border alternative of between 8 and 11 days depending on where one starts and finishes.

The history of creating the border can be found in two works by Canberra historian, Matthew Higgins, "Surveyors on the Snowline" Parts I, II, 1996. This is a report sponsored by the Commonwealth of Australia National Estate Grants Program. Copies are in the ACT Heritage Library. It includes many site descriptions of survey markers.

"Rugged Beyond Imagination", National Museum of Australia Press, 2009. The book also provides a wider account of the area's history.

Both are good reading.

Another historian of a kind is John Evans, who in April 13 had almost completed his ACT border project. He obtained the locations of the surveyors' cairns and markers from the Surveying Office in the ACT Planning and Lands Authority and with great rigour and persistence, searched them out, confirming with GPS and photographing their positions. Despite the passage of time most are still as originally located, sometimes beneath a cover of scrub or partly subsumed. There are around 1600 markers spaced at distances between ~20 and 500 metres. His has been a labour of love and great diligence. John keeps a website blog with all the details.

The border is some 300 km in distance. From a walker's perspective the country is either grassy woodland, pine plantation, dry sclerophyll forest, sub-alpinal or alpine habitat. Instructions to surveyors were to place the border on either the watersheds or to the east, the railway line. So, much of it is high ground: along ridges and over hill-tops. The section of the border in the southwest is demanding bushwalking, off-track in rugged terrain. Elsewhere much can be walked on nearby road or fire-trail, parts of which can be a gravel slog, others quite pleasant. Sentry Box, Kelly, Scabby, Murray and Bimberi are bushwalkers' peaks in that one has to do some serious bushwalking to climb them.

The ACT Border, in total, as a long distance walk, is given as a 19 day schedule with suggested alternatives, firstly in brief outline then followed by some detail. The writer started at Hall and walked, as per map, clockwise.

Those parts which cross private property and for which owner's permission is required are indicated.

Navigation: The part of the border between the Boboyan Road and Mt Gingera is mostly off-track with difficult terrain and requires above-average navigation skills with or without a GPS. It wouldn't be practical under snow unless one had solid experience and suitable gear for that kind of terrain and conditions.

Water can be a problem. The options are caching before-hand, live drops, detours to collect, requests from locals, sterilizing a doubtful source, dry camps carrying enough for two days or finding something suitable en route.

Resupply: Suggested places are,

Start: Hall day 1, RV1: Queanbeyan or Chisholm day 4, RV2: Boboyan Road at the border day 8, RV3: Yaouk Gap day 12, RV4: Ginini car park day 16, finish: Hall day 19. Consult the maps as there are other possibilities and one might choose to use a fewer number.

Weather: Autumn or spring are recommended as the best times to do the trip to avoid the extremes (blizzards or heatwaves) but one should still be prepared for the worst since unseasonable events occur.

Communications: A NEXT G network with mobile phone was used from the summits of Kelly and Bimberi.

Route: The maps listed p3 are good and the border marked on them. This obviates the need to describe the route in detail. It is assumed that navigators will make reasonable choices. The writer has indicated matters of note. E.g. an alternate route might be suggested to avoid problems of water, private property, difficult terrain, provide interest, a low-level option in case of bad weather (or other) or recommended side trips.

Detailed schedule: This is in précis form with sub headings: Day, Destination, Route, Distance, Time, Type of Walking, Map(s), Comment (eg water, private property).

The Southern Border Walk: is a shorter trip of between 8 and 11 days depending upon choice of start and finish points. The reasons for this option are to minimize the need to cross private property and the use of undesirable sections of road or fire trail. Water is readily available and the journey covers some good country. A schedule is also given in brief outline followed by detail.

THE ACT BORDER WALK

Brief outline:

Day	1	Hall	to Old Joe	21.5 km
	2		Poppet Trig	22
	3		pine forest, HQJOC	20
	4		Chisholm	25
	5		near Angle Crossing	19
	6		near Yarara Trig	17
		Or	Caloola	13
	7		Left Hand Creek	18
		Or	Horse Gully Hut	18
	8		Westermans via Mt Clear	24
		Or	via Grassy Creek	15
	9		Sentry Box Mtn	15
		Or	Lutons Crutching Shed	12
	10		upper Sams Creek via border	14
		Or	via Sams Ck	14
	11		Tarn	5
	12		Yaouk Gap	10
	13		Murrays Gap	10
	14		Leura Gap	7
	15		Pryors Hut via border	9
		Or	via fire trail	15
	16		Bendoura Hut	22
	17		Pabral road junction, Mt Coree	18
	18		Murrumbidgee River	25
	19		Hall	15

Detail

Day 1 Hall to Old Joe 21.5 km 7.5 hrs

Route: Along the border to camp near Old Joe, saddle at GR998 035.

Map: Hall, ref p3

Type of walking: mainly grassy woodland, private property Hall to Oak Hill, then Nature Park.

Comment: dry camp, carry water for days 1 and 2

Day 2 Old Joe to Poppet Trig 15 km 6 hrs

Route: Along border to Poppet Trig, GR 091 944

Maps: Hall, Bungendore, ref p3

Type of walking: Grassy woodland, dry sclerophyll forest, pine plantation, fence line and fire trail. Private property, Military area, Nature Park, pine plantation.

Comment: Water problem, suggestions in pre-amble.

Hazard: rifle range near the Federal Highway, Military training area. Need to check safety. Dry camp in pine forest.

Day 3 Poppet Trig to pine forest near Australian Defence Headquarters 20 km, 6.5 hrs

Route: Along the border: Poppet Trig, Bald Hill Trig, Kings Highway, Brooks Reserve, railway line (not through the tunnels), pine forest GR 130.8 860.0

Map: Bungendore, ref p3

Type of walking: Fire-trails in pine forest, grassland, dry sclerophyll forest, railway line. Private property between Bald Hill and Kings Highway, and railway line.

Comment: Water problem, suggestions in pre-amble. Dry camp in pine forest.

Day 4 Pine forest near HQJOC to Chisholm 25 km, 7 hrs

Route: Along the railway line (border); adjacent fire trail in places.

Alternative: Foot track through Molonglo Gorge with difficulty resuming route at bottom end.

Maps: Bungendore, Canberra, Tuggeranong, ref p3

Type of walking: The railway line into Queanbeyan is in active use; care needed. From Qbn to Chisholm the line is no longer in use. Private property issues might apply to walking the line.

Comment: Water might be obtained from the Molonglo River (to be sterilized) or Queanbeyan. Dry camp at a suitable point east of railway line.

Day 5 Chisholm to near Angle Crossing 19 km, 6 hrs

Route: Along border (railway line) to Williamsdale, road to Angle Crossing.

Alternative: Chisholm, Mt Rob Roy, Gigerline Nature Reserve, Angle Crossing.

Maps: Tuggeranong, Williamsdale, ref p3

Type of walking: Either railway line and road or grassland, climb, fire trails then road.

Comment: Water to be obtained from Murrumbidgee River (to be sterilized). Camping at Angle Crossing is prohibited; suitable spots can be found up/down-stream.

The alternate route is recommended as more interesting.

Day 6 Angle Crossing to near Yarara Trig 17 km, 5.5 hrs

Route: By road to start of Clear Range at GR 884 611, along the border to near Yarara Trig in grid square GR 9048.

Alternative: As above but at GR 892 538 descend via spur or gully to cross Lenanes to Caloola Farm. 15 km, 4.5 hrs.

Maps: Williamsdale, Michelago, ref p3

Type of walking: Gravel road, private property along the Clear Range or across Lenanes and Caloola.

Comment: Yarara option, dry camp, carry water from Angle Crossing.

Caloola option, cheap camping fees apply, water, toilets, showers (cold?). This alternative is suggested as being en route up the Naas River, and as a more interesting alternative than along the Clear Range.

Day 7 Yarara Trig to Left Hand Creek or Horse Gully Hut 17 or 19 km, 5.5 or 6 hr

Route: Yarara Trig, along the line of the range, mostly on fire trail, then descend to Left Hand Creek or further along fire trail to Horse Gully Hut.

Alternative: Caloola to Horse Gully Hut on Naas River fire trail. ~18 km, 5.5 hr. Demanding Hut a few kilometers further on is also a pleasant option.

Maps: Michelago, Colinton, ref p3

Type of walking: mainly fire trail.

Comment: Most of the Clear Range is private property. The Naas River fire trail is in the Namadgi National Park. The writer prefers the latter route. Water needs to have been carried from Angle Crossing for the Clear Range route with resupply at Left Hand Creek or Horse Gully Hut. The Naas fire trail is along the river.

Day 8 Left Hand Creek/ Horse Gully Hut to Westermans

Route: Left Hand Creek, fire trail Mt Clear, Top Flats, Burnt Hill, Boboyan Road, Westermans Hut. ~19 km, 6 hrs.

Alternative: Horse Gully Hut, Mt Clear camp ground, Grassy Creek fire trail, Boboyan Road, Westermans Hut GR 780 267, ~12 km, 4.5 hrs.

Maps: Colinton, Bredbo, Shannons Flat, ref p3

Type of walking: mainly fire trail.

Comment: Both routes are in Namadgi National Park. Water is available via Grassy Creek or Westermans.

Day 9 Westermans to Sentry Box Mountain

Route: Westermans to junction of Grassy Creek fire trail and border at GR 734 300 (a locked gate). Follow the border. An overgrown fire trail runs close by, finishing at GR 721 317. Suggested camp sites: snowgums with grassy understory ~GR 722 330 or sheltered saddle, tree cover and grass ~GR 716 337. ~12 km, 5.5 hrs.

Alternative: (particularly in bad weather). Westermans, Grassy Creek fire trail Grid Square 73 30, Lone Pine Homestead ruin, Lutons Crutching Shed ~GR 758 335. ~12 km, 5.5 hrs.

Maps: Shannons Flat, Yaouk, ref p3.

Type of walking: sub-alpine grassy woodland, some fire trail, rock slabs on Sentry Box.

Comment: For Sentry Box: dry camp, water carried from Westermans, a hazard if covered in snow. Lutons has a water tank.

Day 10 Sentry Box /Lutons to upper Sams Creek

Route: two stages

Stage 1: Sentry Box along border to narrow watershed between Sams and Naas Creeks ~GR 714 398. ~6 km, 3 .5 hrs.

Alternative 1: From Lutons Crutching Shed follow the Sams Creek fire trail up the Naas Valley. The trail becomes overgrown after the junction with Morris Luton fire trail ~GR 729 370 but can be followed with care to the watershed at ~GR 714 398. ~8 km, ~3 hrs

Stage 2: Collect water from Sams Creek GR 713 400, then along the border. From the knoll GR 720 415 to the saddle below Kelly GR 705 457 the going is difficult and very slow on rock and in thick scrub. Descend to camp at GR 702 443 or GR 702 447. Add ~6 km and 6 hrs for this stage.

Alternative 2: Proceed up Sams Creek from GR 713 400 to camp at GR 702 443 or GR 702 447. This route has parts of an old fire trail but is mostly overgrown. Add ~5 km and 2.5 hrs for this stage.

Maps: Yaouk, Rendezvous Creek, ref p3.

Type of walking: sub-alpinal scrub.

Comment: Water available from Sams Creek.

Day 11 Sams Creek, Mt Kelly, tarn on Scabby Range. 5 km, ~5 hrs.

Route: Go to the saddle GR 705 457 via the east side of the swamp and west side of the upper part of the creek. Climb Kelly via the North East side. From Kelly descend to follow the border to camp at the tarn GR 687 433. (A weather-exposed campsite).

Map: Rendezvous Creek, ref p3.

Type of walking: alpinal scrub.

Comment: In bad weather or snow move directly to the tarn from Sams Creek via saddle GR 691 446.

Day 12 Tarn to Yaouk Gap ~10 km, ~6 hrs

Route: Tarn GR 687 433, Mt Scabby, top of spur GR 677 421, descend to bend on Porcupine Creek GR 666 426 then along ridge to Yaouk Gap.

Maps: Yaouk, Rendezvous Creek, ref p3.

Type of walking: alpinal scrub.

Comment: Water carried from tarn for the day, water tank at Nooweena Hut (locked) at Yaouk Gap or ~600 m south down fire trail to creek.

The writer has yet to do the section Porcupine Creek to Yaouk Gap (~6 km). The descent and move across to Rolleys Hut and up the fire trail is an okay alternative.

Day 13 Yaouk Gap to Murray Gap. ~10 km, 5.5 hrs.

Route: Along the border. The climb out of Yaouk gap has close scrub but it's reasonable to move through.

Map: Rendezvous Creek, ref p3.

Type of walking: alpinal scrub.

Comment: Carry water from Yaouk Gap for the day. At Murray Gap there is good water in the creek ~900m to the east along the AAWT. Camp in the gap on the border.

Day 14 Murray Gap to Leura Gap ~7 km, 6 hrs.

Route: Along the border; a strenuous day.

Map: Rendezvous Creek, ref p3.

Type of walking: Difficult terrain, alpinal scrub.

Comment: Carry water for the day from Murrays Gap. At Leura Gap fetch water from McKeahnies Creek 1.4 km to east on fire trail. An option would be to descend to the creek

camping on relatively flat ground a few hundred metres before-hand and return to the gap next morning.

Day 15 Leura Gap to Pryors Hut ~9 km, ~7 hrs.

Route: Along the border, a strenuous day.

Alternative: via fire trail from McKeahnies Creek. ~15 km, 5.5 hrs.

Maps: Rendezvous Creek, Corin Dam, ref p3.

Type of walking: difficult terrain, alpine scrub.

Comment: Carry water for the day from Leura Gap. There is water in the small swampy area to the rear of Pryors Hut or at Snowy Flats Creek on the fire trail GR 616 620.

Day 16 Pryors Hut to Bendoura Hut ~22 km, ~6 hrs

Route: Along the Franklin Road, side trip up Mt Agie from Agie Gap, turn along Chalet Road GR 616 772 to Bendoura Hut GR 630 787.

Maps: Corin Dam, Tidbinbilla.

Type of walking: road, fire trail.

Comment: Carry water for the day from Pryors Hut. There is a water tank at Bendoura Hut and in soaks near the track junction GR 623 778.

Day 17 Bendoura Hut to Pabral road junction, side trip up Mt Coree. ~18 km, 7 hrs total.

Route: Along the roads: Bendoura Hut to Franklin Road, Piccadilly Circus, Two-Sticks Road, Pabral Road junction GR 643 925. Side trip up Coree (3 km and 3 hrs).

Maps: Tidbinbilla, Cotter Dam.

Type of walking: roads, fire trails.

Comment: Dry camp near Pabral Road junction; collect water en route from Bulls Head picnic area GR 640 826 (enough for two days).

Day 18 Pabral Road to Murrumbidgee River. 25 km, 8 hrs.

Route: A long day: follow Two-Sticks Road all the way to Mountain Creek Road, then along the border to the Murrumbidgee River. Reasonable campsite on the east side of the river.

Alternative: To avoid private property go north along Mountain Creek Road, turn into Fairlight Road, locked gate at GR 775 988, down river selecting a reasonable campsite.

Maps: Cotter Dam, Umburra, ref p3.

Comment: The river is easily waded at the border, water levels being average. Water from the river but sterilized.

Day 19 Murrumbidgee River to Hall. ~15 km ~5.5 hrs.

Route: Along the border using appropriate 4WD tracks, fence lines and public tracks.

Maps: Umburra, Hall, ref p3.

Type of walking: Across farm land.

Comment: Carry water for the day from the river. Much of the route is across private property requiring permission for access.

Note: The nearest public bus service (No. 52 to Belconnen interchange) departs Gold Creek, Federation Square, ~3.5 km down the Barton Highway from Hall, at regular times.

THE SOUTHERN BORDER WALK

Refer to p2 for options on start and finish points.

Brief outline:

Day	1	Tharwa to Caloola	22 km
	2	Horse Gully Hut	18
	3	Westermans Hut	15
	4	Sentry Box Mountain	15
	5	Sams Creek	14
	6	Tarn via Kelly	5
	7	Yaouk Gap	10
	8	Murrays Gap	10
	9	Leura Gap	7
	10	Pryors hut	9
	11	Corin Dam or Ginini car park	7, 4

Detail:

Day 1 **Tharwa Information Centre to Caloola.** **22 km, ~7 hrs.**

Route: Walk east crossing Gudgenby River, Smiths Road to Murrumbidgee River. Follow the line of the river south on a contour well out of the Gigerline Gorge to Reedy Creek at GR 907 626 then south to the Angle Crossing road (all in Nature Reserve).

Refer to day 7 of the 19 day schedule for the remainder of the day.

Maps: Williamsdale, Michelago, ref p3.

Type of walking: Grassy woodland, roads.

Comment: Contact Caloola Farm for permission to enter their property and camp. Carry water for the day from Tharwa.

Days 2 to 10 **Refer to days 7 to 15 of the 19 day schedule.**

Day 11 **Pryors Hut to Corin Dam** **7 km 3 hrs**

Route: North along the Franklin fire trail to GR 616 638; turn north east along Stockyard Spur, follow the fire trail to ~GR 648 663 then the walking-track down to Corin Dam.

Alternative: North along the Franklin fire trail to Ginini car park at GR 613 671. ~4 km, 1 hr.

Maps: Corin Dam, Tidbinbilla, ref p3.

Type of walking: fire trail, well-made track down to Corin Dam.

Comment: The Franklin Road is well-maintained gravel, the Corin Dam tar. For vehicular pick-up both need to be checked with National Parks: that they haven't been closed due to weather/season.

Other exit options with suitable vehicle pick-up might be,

Yaouk Gap to south or to the north to Cotter hut then AAWT to the Orroral or Tharwa.

Murray Gap then AAWT to Orroral or Tharwa.

Leura Gap, fire trail to Cotter hut then AAWT to Orroral or Tharwa.