

Walk

Wollemi National Park: Tambo Creek-Pinchgut Creek Loop

Leader

Yuri Bolotin

Maps

Colo Heights, Rock Hill. GPS setting WGS84.

Walk Description and Route

This 5-day Colo Wilderness pack walk starts and finishes at the end of Grassy Hill Trail. Once down at the Colo, walk downstream and enter Tambo Creek. Walk upstream till about GR 682 150. Ascend northwards, enter Pinchgut Creek and follow it downstream to GR 692 180. Climb the ridge to the north and follow it eastwards, eventually finding a pass down to the Colo. No water needs to be carried, but there will be a different camp site every day. About 30 km. Exploratory. Scrambling and exposure.

Rating

6M. S333E

Gear Recommendations

Pack walk gear.

Dates walked

27-31 August 2026.

The Party

Yuri Bolotin (leader), Karen Iorns, Bernard Lo, Ari Shestopal, Henry Lian, 5.

The Weather

Day 1 –An overcast sky in the morning (after some overnight rain), followed by a cool, partially sunny day. Little wind at times. Temperature range 13 to 18 degrees C.

Day 2 – A cool morning, then a dry, sunny day, with light breezes. It felt warmer than yesterday due to the presence of the sun and no clouds in the sky, even though the thermometer readings do not reflect that. Temperature range 8 to 18 degrees C.

Day 3 –A dry, partially cloudy morning, followed by more open sky in the afternoon. Light winds at times. Temperature range 7 to 18 degrees C.

Day 4 –A cold morning followed by a fine, warm day with occasional breezes. Temperature range 4 to 22 degrees C.

Day 5 –A cool morning, then a mostly fine, very warm day with light breezes. Temperature range 10 to 25 degrees C.

Background Notes

The idea of this walk came last year via an email from Michael Law, a Newcastle bushwalker, who had been following our adventures for some time. He had done this route on a few occasions and thought I might enjoy it too. Since then, we had been trying to organise to do it together, but due to the tyranny of distance and other factors it proved to be difficult. In the end, we embarked on this walk, with some variations, without Michael, but I must thank him for giving me the original concept and lots of detailed information. We are still yet to meet in person, and I am looking forward to the day when we finally will.

Track Notes

Note: time references in the text relate to Grid References in the table at the end of these Track Notes.

Day 1 – 27 August 2026

Our cars were parked at the end of Grassy Hill Trail. Due to its current state of disrepair, the trip from Putty Road is not recommended for ordinary 4WDs, like my Subaru Forester. Our adventure began at 0830 as we followed an old fire trail, making our way through a dense forest punctuated by tall, slender Mountain Blue Gums, *Eucalyptus deanei*, and a variety of ground Ferns. Large bushes of Native Indigo, *Indigosphaera australis*, festooned with purple buds, and bright yellow *Hibbertia saligna* flowers were cheerful reminders of the imminent arrival of spring.

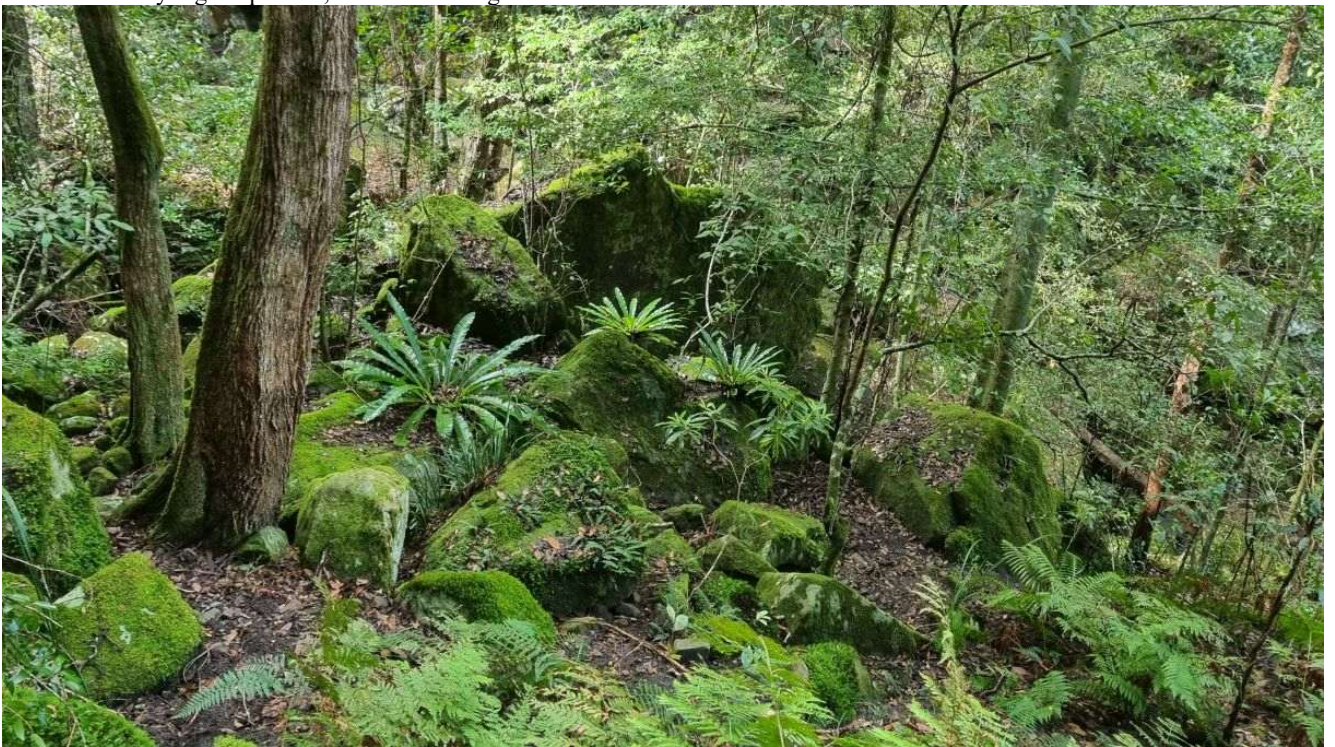


The luxuriant forest beside the track. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

By the time the end of the rough road was reached at 0912, we only managed to shed a small amount of elevation. That changed immediately as we plunged down a steep narrow track. Before long, glimpses of the Colo gorge appeared through the dense tree cover. The distant high sandstone cliffs were dramatically spotlighted by the sun, which was now trying to make an appearance, after sitting behind thick clouds all morning. Carefully negotiating our way down the steep and slippery steps, arranged amongst huge bright green Moss and Bird Nest Fern-encrusted boulders, we paused to marvel at a few gigantic Turpentine trees near the track; one of them must be 1,000 years old+, judging by its girth.



Karen at a really big Turpentine; Bernard looking on. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Bird Nest Ferns and Mosses on the forest floor. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

By 0940, we came down into Canoe Creek, where the track became indistinct. Soon, a little scramble was required, to secure the final leg of descent into the rainforest. Fifteen minutes later, we stopped at a brilliant viewpoint overlooking an 180-degree bend of the Colo, with a high castle-like headland towering above it. Wow! I had been here many times before, but this sight always takes my breath away.



The group on the final stages of the descent. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

When we descended all the way down to the Colo sands, the same incredible landscape was the backdrop for our morning tea break, from 1006 to 1018. As we were hoisting our packs back onto our shoulders, a couple of Rock Wallabies were seen scurrying away in the cliffs above. They must have been sitting there and watching us all along.



The dramatic headland on the Colo banks. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The next part of the journey was on a faint track about 15 metres above the river and 40 metres away from it. A male Lyrebird was sighted here, not far from a cluster of bright orange Scarlet Bracket Fungi, *Trametes*

coccinea, occupying a fallen log. The track was visible about 70% of the time, but even the bits in between were easy to get through.

The following section was along the beach and then across extensive rock platforms just above the river. Soon, once again, we moved a bit further away, where a surprisingly descent track was found. By 1135, the Colo developed some rapids, where a crossing might have been possible, but our progress along the pad was too good to abandon it. There were chainsaw-cut branches here and some tape (now removed) – I have no idea who did it and why.



The Colo gorge. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Next, we plodded along a very long beach, that ended at an area where the gorge was very wide and the river, only 15 metres across and ankle-deep. A perfect place to cross. At 1210. A long stretch of sand followed, and then at 1231, the party came to a grassy elevated flat patch just above the water – a perfect spot for camping, and today, for the lunch break. On the logs nearby, numerous large white Fungi, *Postia* *sp.*, were noted. The sky by now had only a few scattered clouds left, and the air felt pleasantly warm.



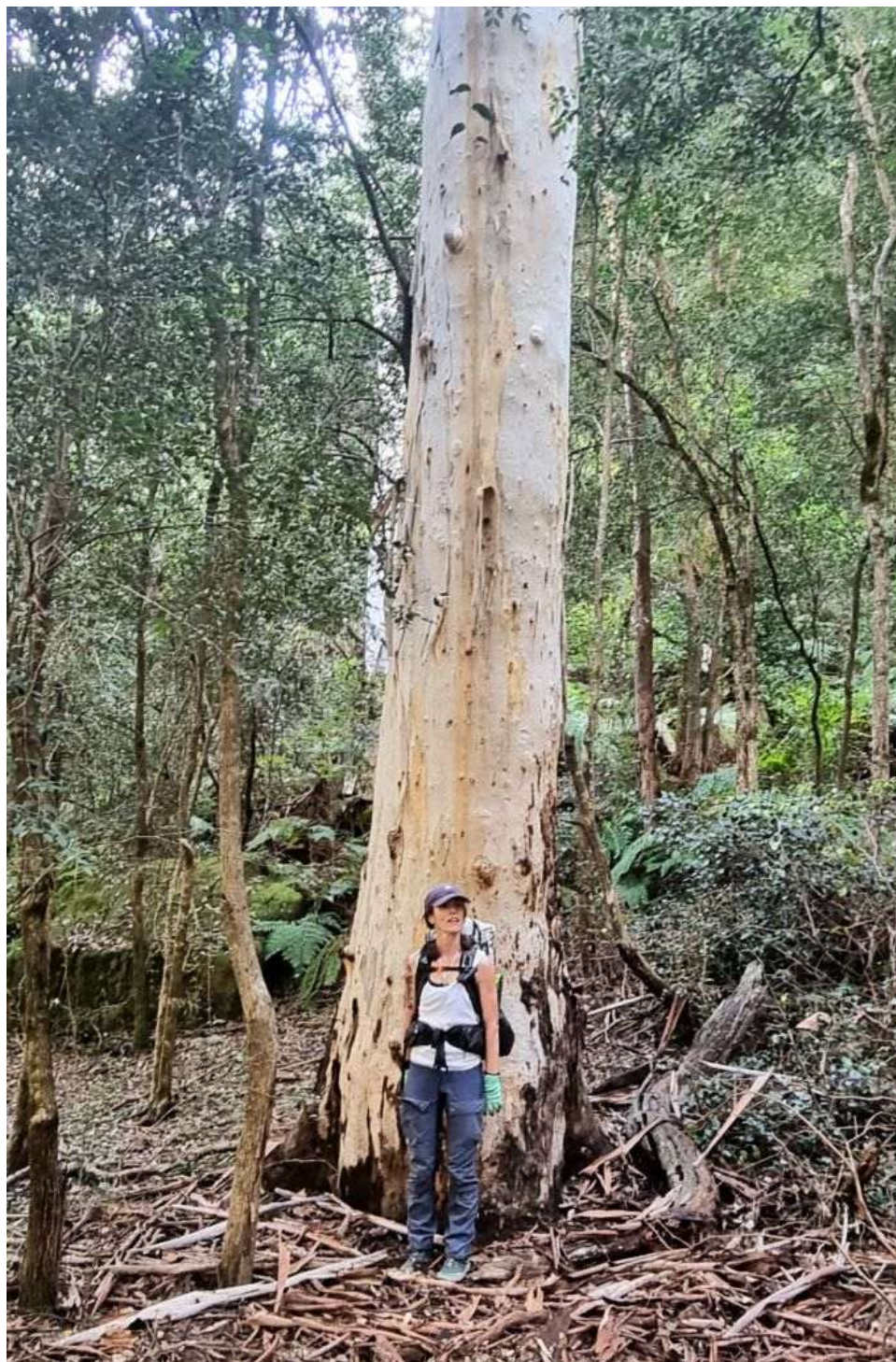
Ari and Henry crossing the Colo. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Traversing a long beach. Photo: Bernard Lo.

At 1255, the walking continued, now along a scrubby, bouldery area about 10 metres above the river, which was going through some rapids. A nice, almost level terrace along the way provided a temporary respite,

enabling faster progress, before more scattered rocks and dense vegetation had to be dealt with. The gorge then became much narrower. High sandstone cliffs that framed it, lit by the afternoon sun, cast brilliantly shimmering reflections into large pools of mirror-flat, calm water.

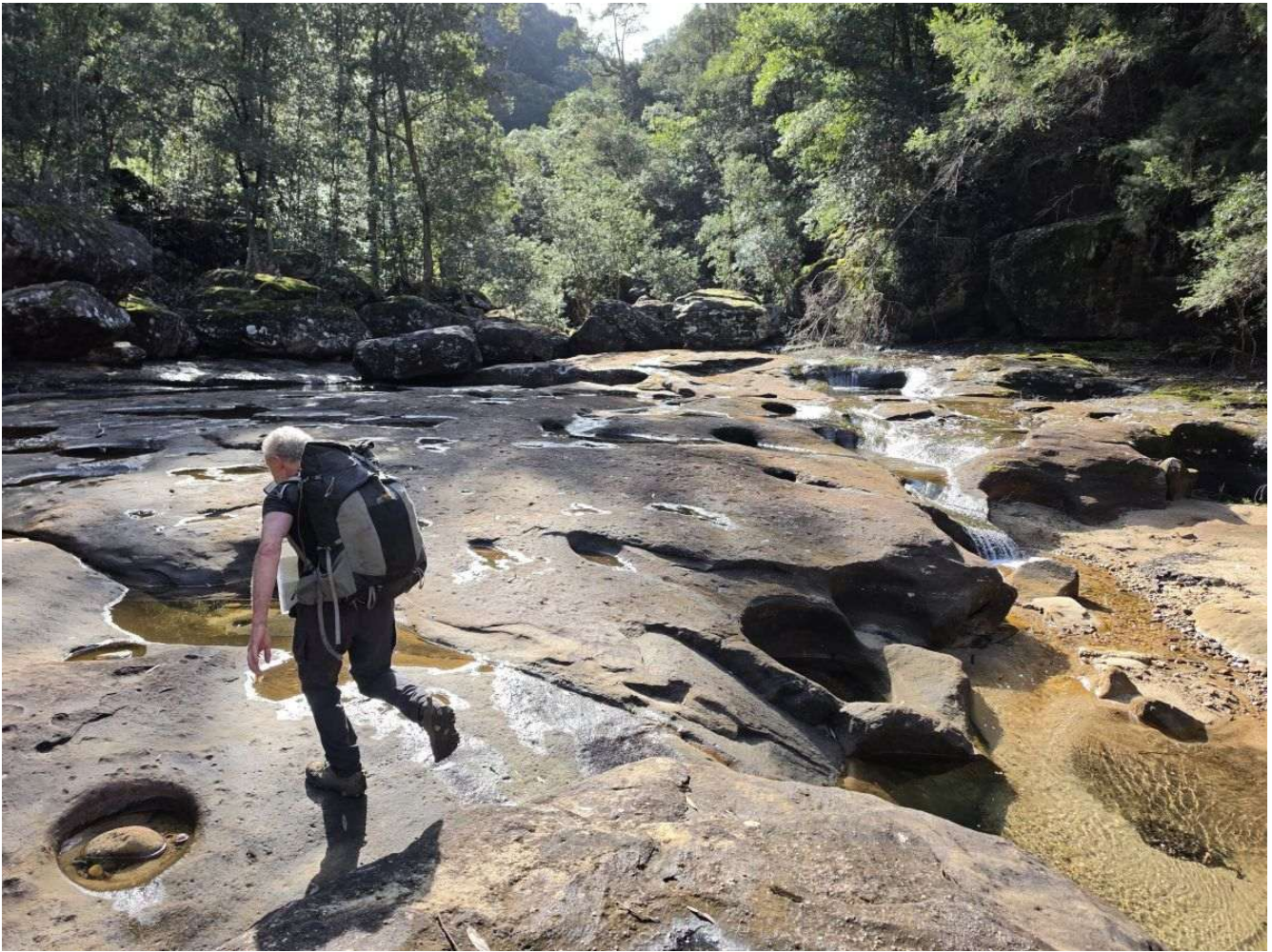


Karen underneath a huge Grey Gum. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

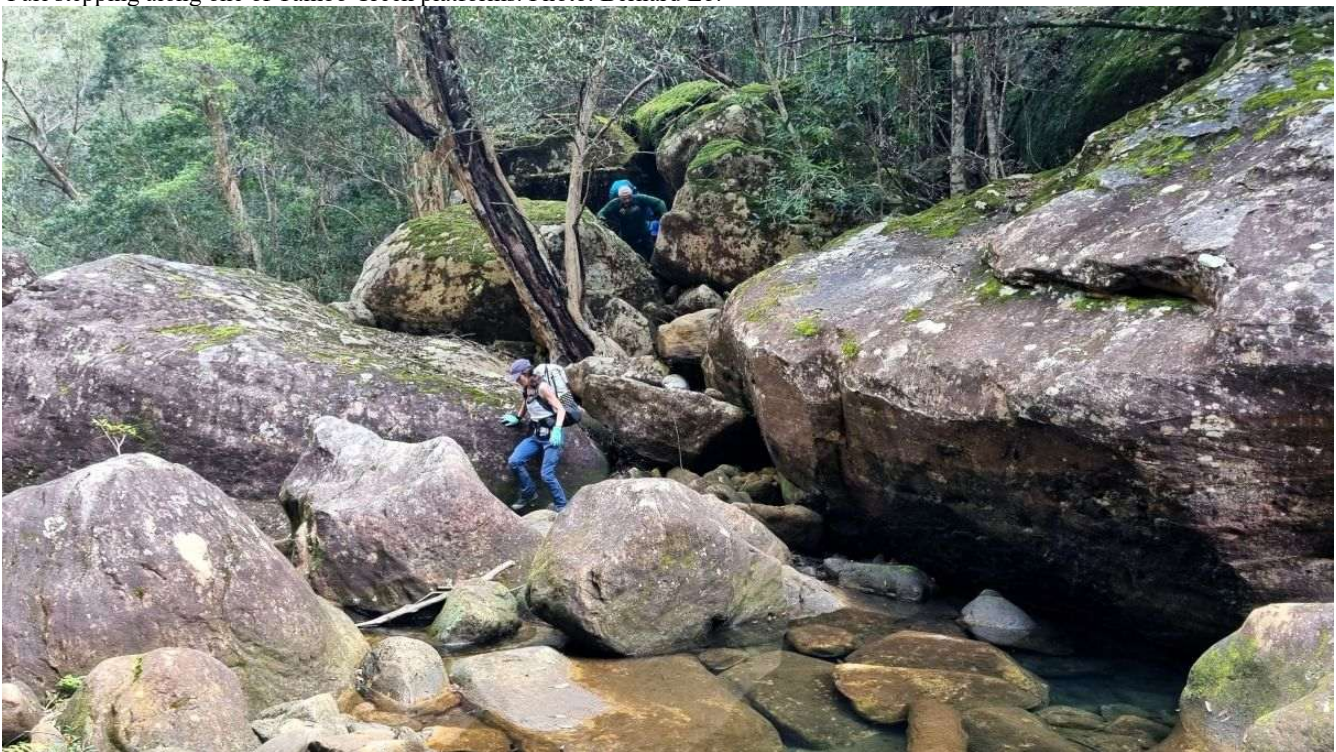
At 1434, the group arrived at Tambo Creek and the previously planned camping location, but I felt it was much too early to stop; some progress up the creek today might serve us well later on during the trip, and so we continued. In retrospect, it was a great decision that saved us a lot of trouble in the next couple of days.

Immediately upon entering Tambo Creek, the surrounding landscape underwent a dramatic change. The gorge here was tight, steep and bouldery, and only ten minutes later, we crossed the first of many stunning

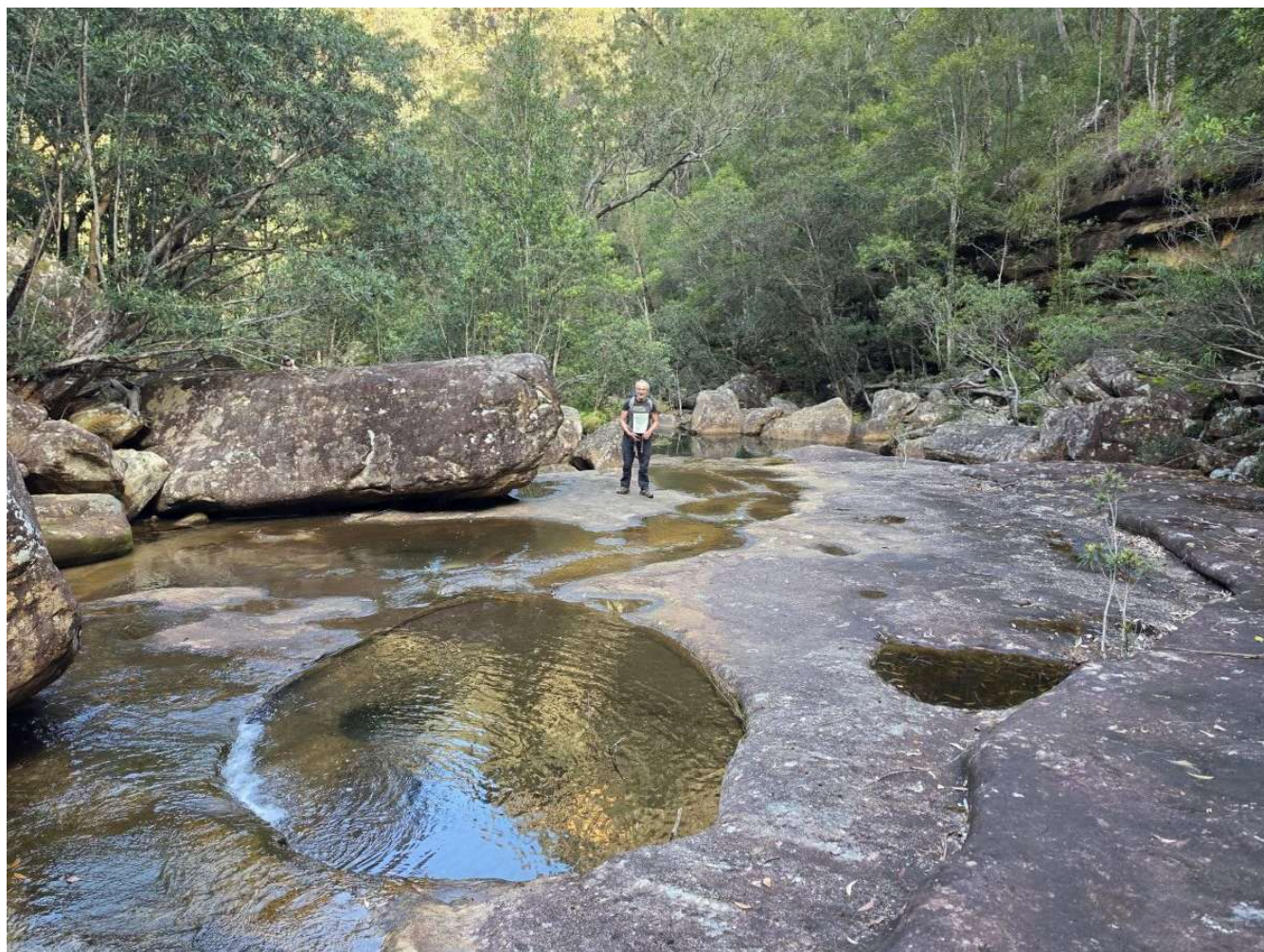
rock platforms along this watercourse, featuring a series of deep, languid pools contrasting with white-water cascades running beside them.



Yuri stepping along one of Tambo Creek platforms. Photo: Bernard Lo.



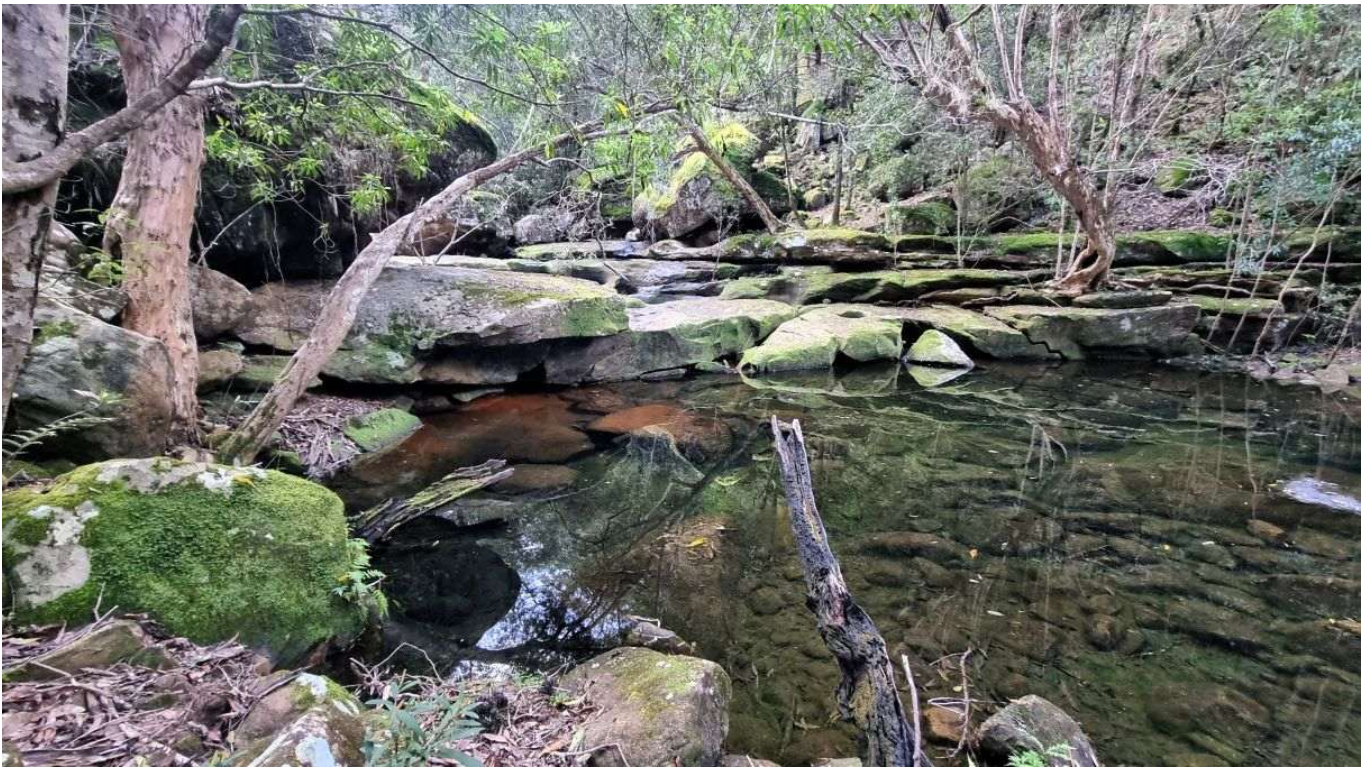
Karen and Ari in Tambo Creek. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Yuri in Tambo Creek. Photo: Bernard Lo.



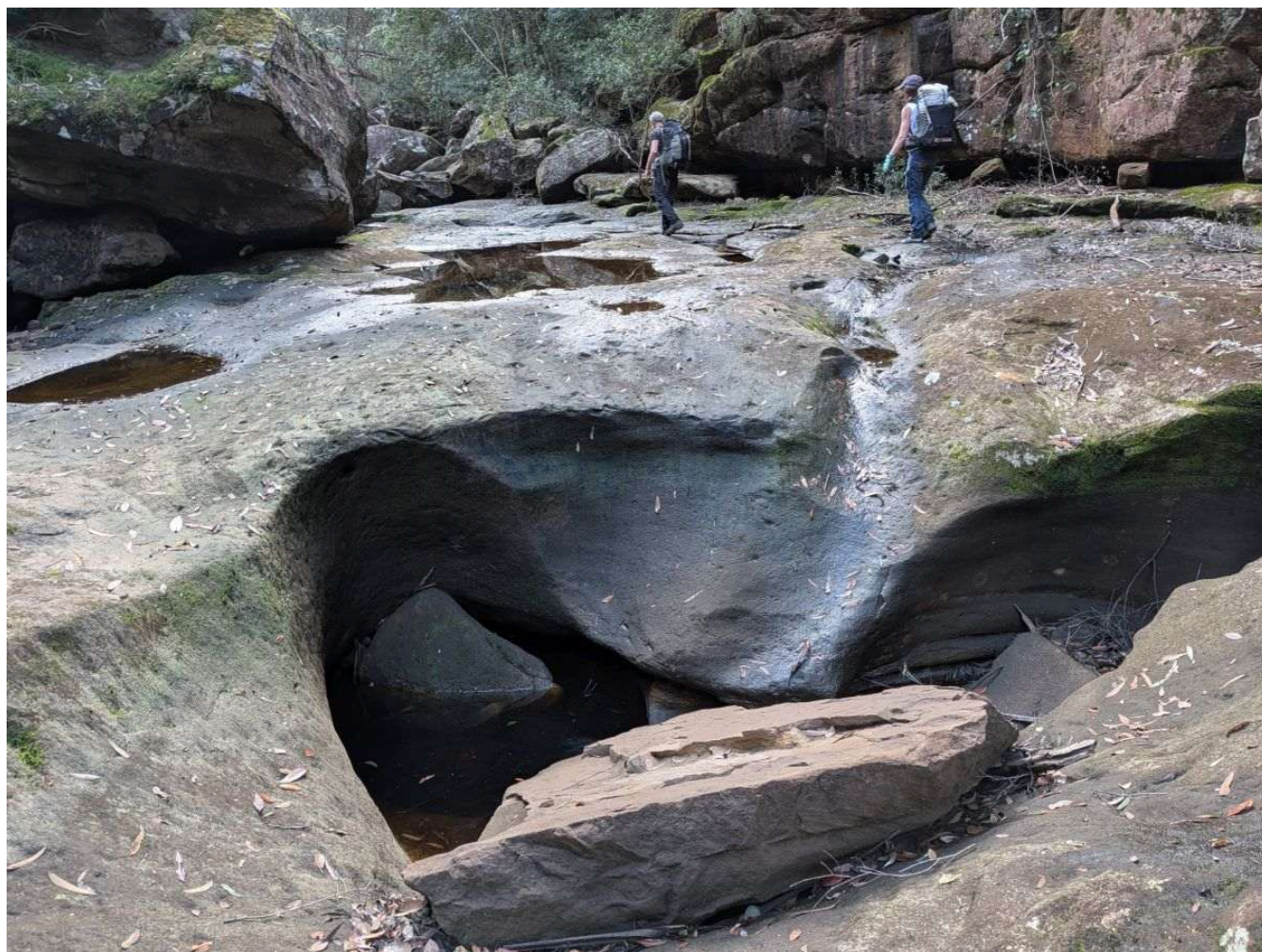
Bernard and Ari negotiating a tricky spot. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



A tranquil pool. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Another thing we noticed straight away was extremely slippery stone surfaces underfoot. Bernard had done some previous research and told us that on Bob Buck's March 1974 1st edition *Colo Routes and Passes* map, this tributary of the Colo is labelled *Suicide (Tambo) Creek*, and I could now understand why. I strongly recommend helmets to be worn along the entire course we traversed during this trip. I wished we had them with us. This would have saved me a lot of worry, despite the extra space and weight in our backpacks.

These slimy rocks do slow you down, but at least you have more time to enjoy the beautiful gorge scenery. Since we left the Colo, not many opportunities for camping our group of five people could be seen, so when at 1605, we came to a spot that looked possible, it was an instant decision – we are staying here for the night! Everyone had a small individual flat area, with the communal fireplace situated on the river bank and plentiful clean running water two steps away.



Tambo Creek platforms and holes. Photo: Ari Shestopal.

Day statistics: total distance 8.5 km; total ascent 247 m.

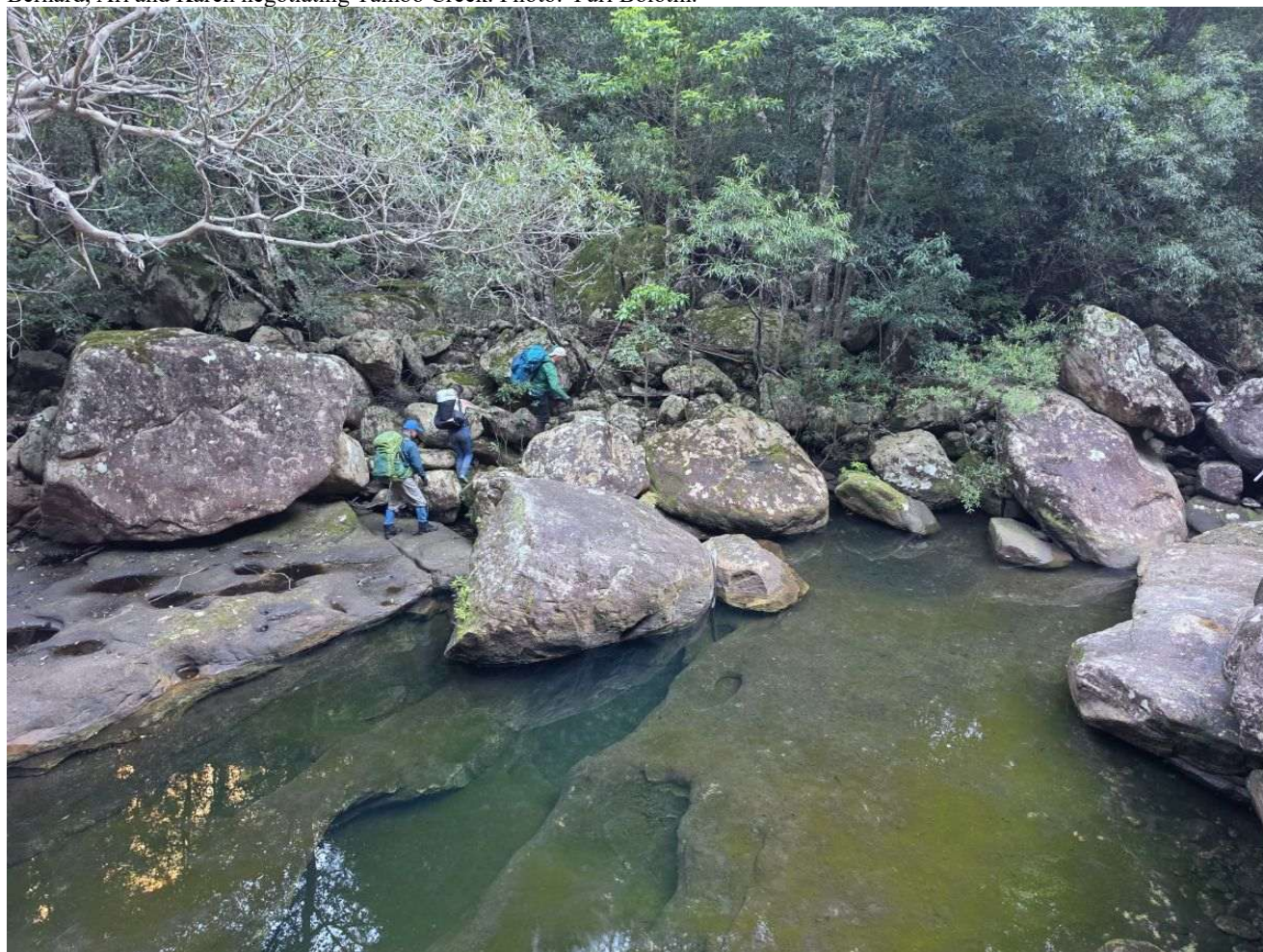
Day 2 – 28 August 2026

After a quiet night, punctuated by Owl calls, we were packed and ready to go by 0742. Just past our campsite, lay a string of beautiful long, flat rock platforms, with water rushing through them via narrow channels, then pausing in clear, shimmering grey-green pools. Huge Lichen-decorated boulders were scattered throughout, adding another dimension to this beguiling landscape.

All this was very inspiring and pleasing to our eyes, but probably not to our feet as every single stone surface appeared to be covered in thin ice-like slippery slime. We had to focus on every single step, and the only way to fully relax and enjoy this amazing landscape was to stop for a minute, have a good look around and take a photo or two. Due to all these factors, our journey proceeded with almost glacial pace.



Bernard, Ari and Karen negotiating Tambo Creek. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



A pool and a boulder pile-up along the creek. Photo: Bernard Lo.

After a while, the flat platforms gave way to boulder pile-ups, where the progress had to be even slower in order to negotiate vertical drops and greasy landings. At 0848, we gingerly stepped, crawled and scrambled,

with some difficulty, along a narrow slippery ledge that went above a large pool, to avoid a swim. The narrow gorge of Tambo Creek was still in deep shadow, and the air felt chilly, so a submersion would not have been pleasant. At the far end of this traverse, I accidentally pushed Ari's shoulder and he dropped his mobile phone in a metre of water. The phone was retrieved and, luckily for both of us, continued to function as if nothing had happened.

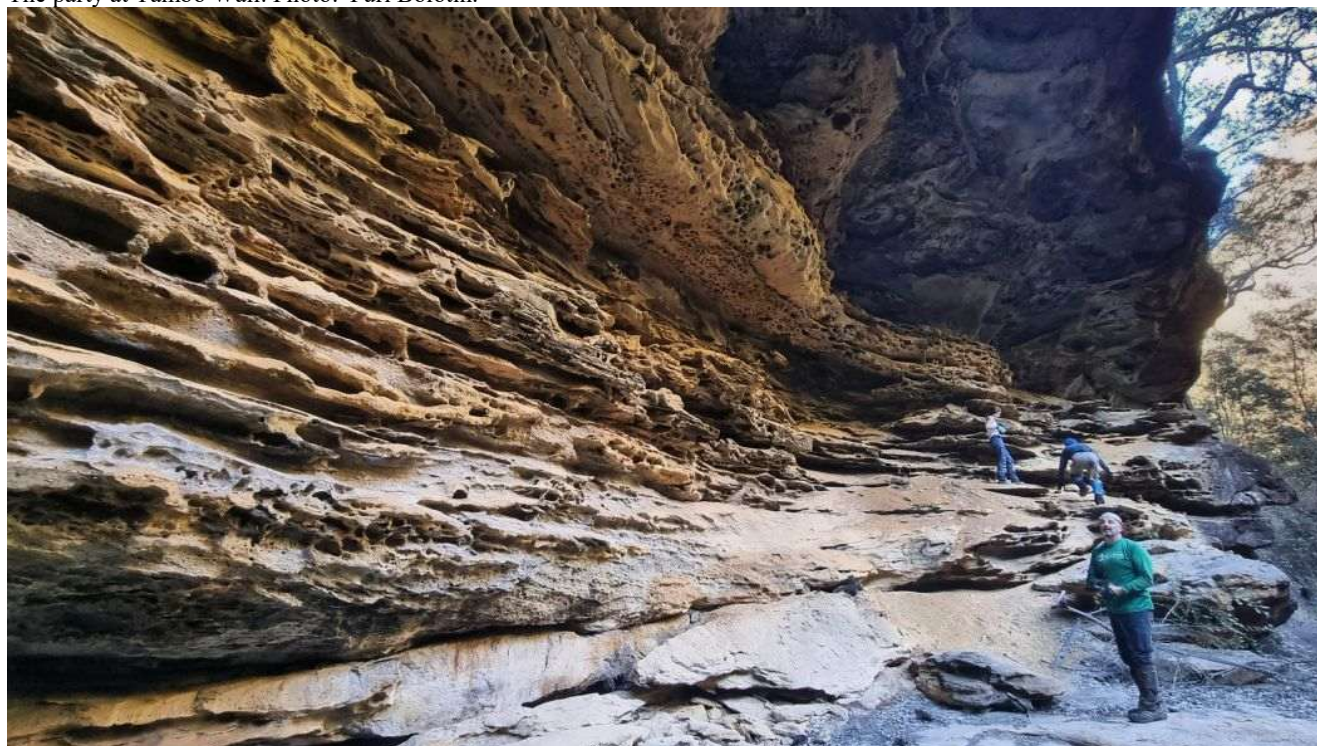


Bernard, Yuri and Ari at a huge Moss-covered boulder. Photo: Karen Iorns.

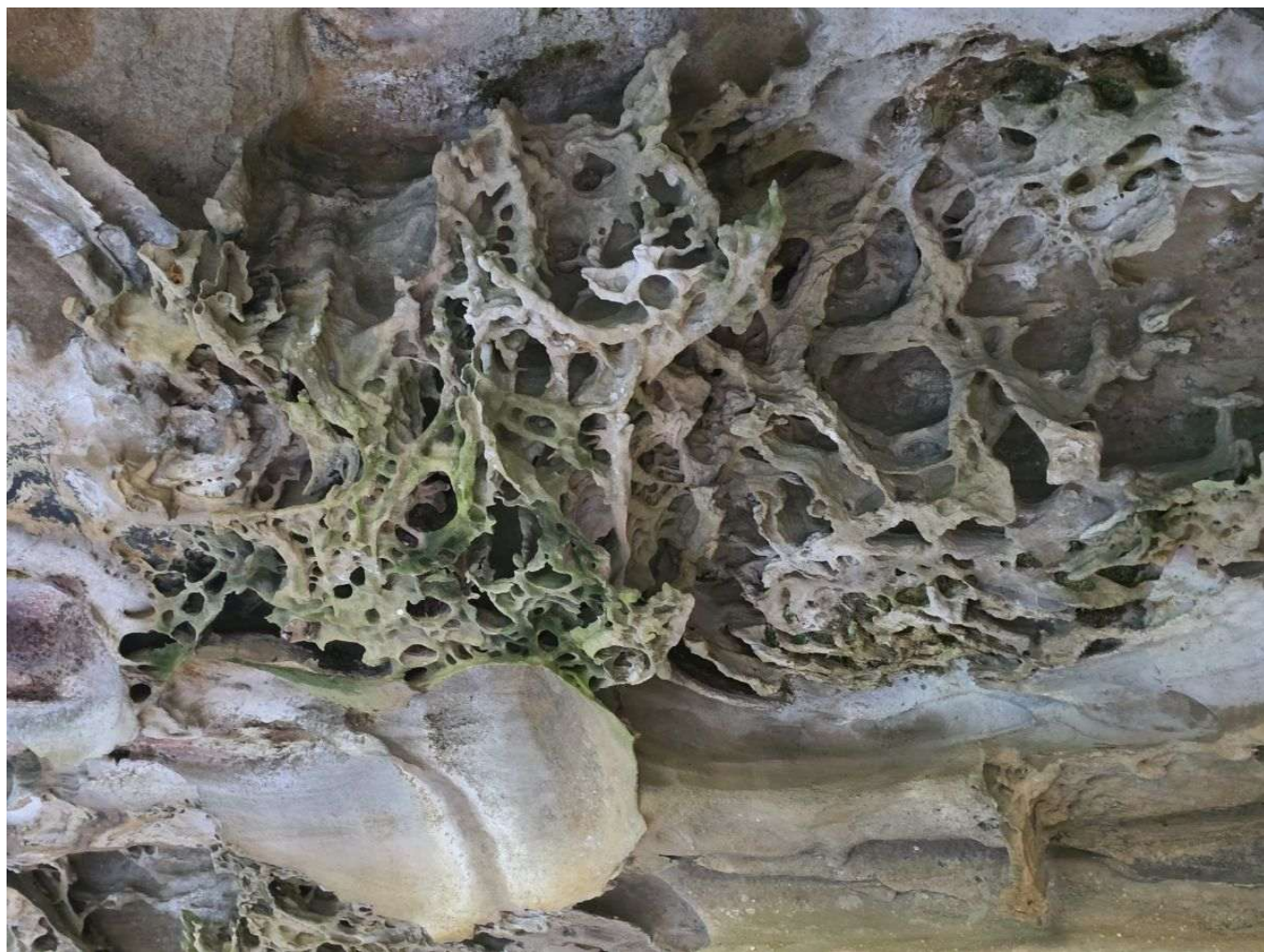
At 0914, we came to an amazing feature on the eastern side of the gorge, just above the creek, an 80 metres+ long, 25 m high wall of exquisitely eroded sandstone, featuring orange, beige, black, white, grey and green-coloured carved surfaces as well as big panels of tafoni. This enormous overhang added variety and another Wow! factor to the trip today. I called it Tambo Wall. Seven minutes were spent here on exploration and photography.



The party at Tambo Wall. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Exploring Tambo Wall. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Tambo Wall detail. Photo: Bernard Lo.

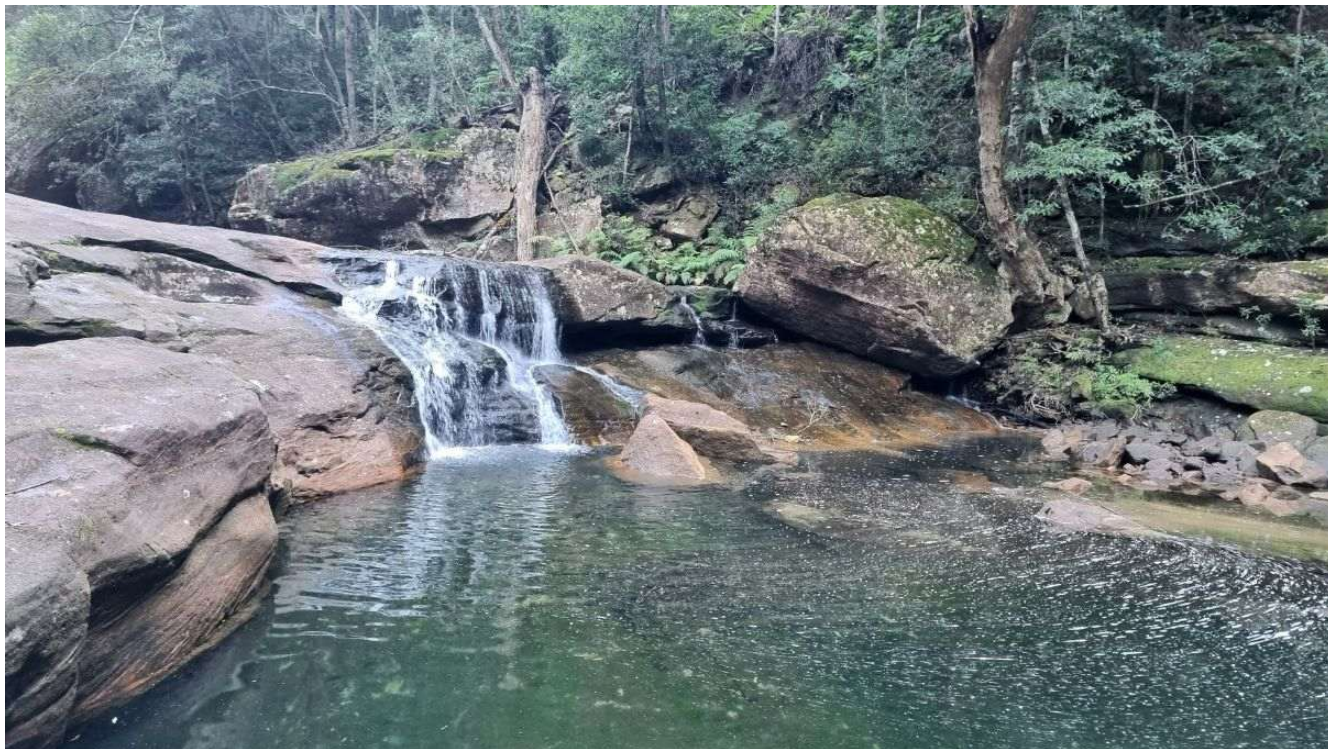


Tambo Wall detail. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Soon, we were back in the creek, crossing and re-crossing frequently. In one place, pack passing had to be used in order to squeeze through a tiny gap between the boulders. On the other side, a large log prolifically decorated by Splitgill Fungi, *Schizophyllum sp.*, commanded our attention. The rock platforms now made a comeback, complete with cascades, blue pools and a four metre waterfall.



An obstacle course. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

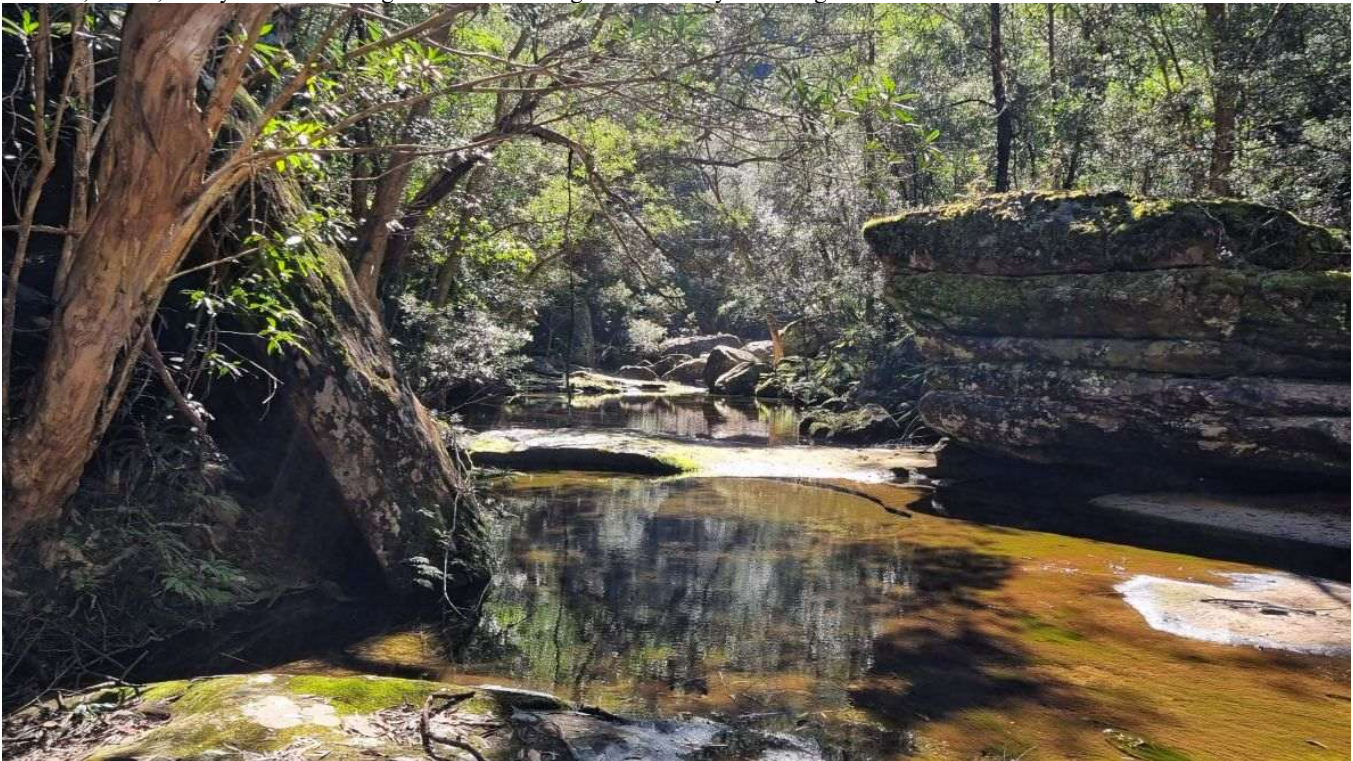


A waterfall on the creek. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The sun, casting its warm rays into the gorge, could now be seen just around the corner ahead of us. Making our way towards it, we soon found a sunny overhang just above the creek for morning tea. From 1006 to 1024. We covered about 1.2 kilometres since leaving the camp over 2 hours ago, and that was not for the lack of trying or relaxing for too long.



Bernard, Karen, Henry and Ari settling down for morning tea in a sunny overhang. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Shimmering pools. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Beautiful platforms and green pools, bordered by craggy Water Gums, *Tristaniaopsis laurina*, and mossy boulders continued for a few hundred metres, before scattered rocks returned. At 1043, I recorded a camping cave, good enough to accommodate 3-4 people. The gorge now became a bit wider and flatter, and we could walk just above the creek, where it was less slippery. Plentiful logs and debris ensured our pace did not change much. This part was very picturesque due to dappled sunlight illuminating the rainforest floor, scattered cushions of soft Mosses, Fern glades, Liana aerial nets, giant Turpentine trees, as well as abundant Coachwoods and Sassafras.

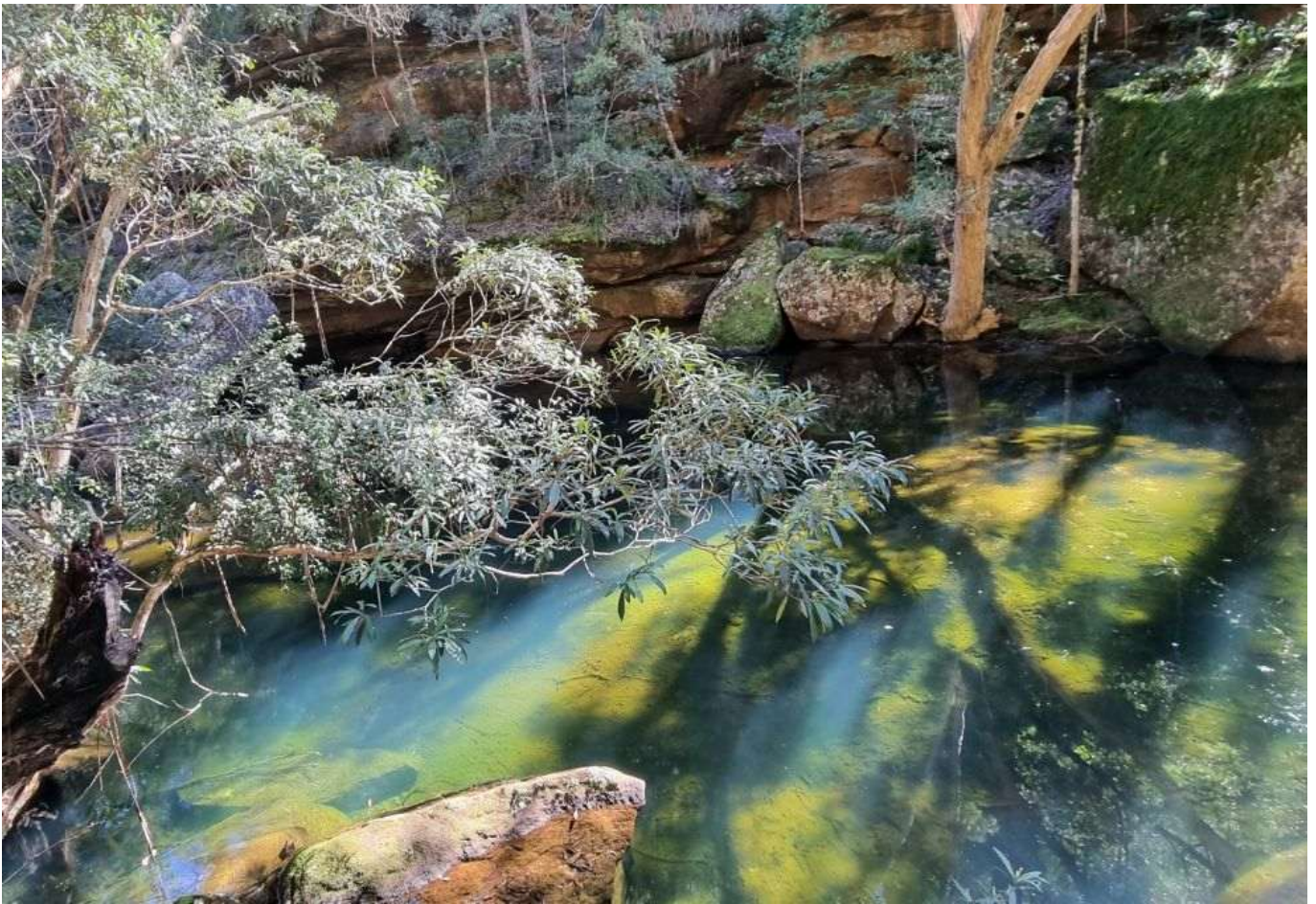


Warm dappled light makes walking extra pleasant. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Henry, Karen, Ari and Bernard in Tambo Creek. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

A big male Lyrebird was seen here, flying in between trees, then landing on a high branch above our heads but a bit too far for a good photo. A deep, emerald blue-green 50 metre long pool was the next highlight, although the scrub on the side of it was pretty horrible to push through.



The big emerald pool. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Between 1242 and 1315, the party stopped for lunch on a wide terrace with water cascades and a choice of sunny or shady spots.

Extensive platforms continued after we had resumed. Entering the rainforest again, I touched what looked like a trunk of a large growing tree, but it suddenly started to collapse towards me. Fortunately, I was able to step away, but that certainly had been a scary experience. We continued at a similar pace as slippery surfaces were still a major factor, as well countless side changes that ensured our feet stayed wet and remained in close contact with the slimy floors at most times. At 1520, we paused to photograph a 15 metre long beautiful cave with steeply raked floors and exquisitely decorated ceiling.



A beautiful cave along the way. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Forty minutes later, the group reached a long narrow overhang near the water, with enough flat space to accommodate us all. Towering above, were huge walls of eroded sandstone, only reachable through our eyesight, and magnificently lit by the afternoon sun. Deep shadows had already enveloped the gorge at the bottom where we stood – a good reminder that it was time to stop and begin setting the camp for the night. Despite it being a slow journey, we were now located within a few hundred metres from my planned exit gully, so I could not be happier. I was also glad that we had made some progress along Tambo Creek yesterday.

We spent the entire day in Tambo Creek. I am sure that the slimy rocks will soon be forgotten, but the memories of this stunning gorge will remain with us for a very long time. I mused about the fact that the photos we took only captured the beauty, with the ‘Suicide Creek’ side being completely invisible.

Day statistics: total distance 6.8 km; total ascent 319 m.

Day 3 – 29 August 2026

Loud, prolific birdsong at around 6 am was a signal to get up and occupy ourselves with the morning’s proceedings. By 0735, the group departed from our comfortable campsite in the long overhang by the creek, walking upstream for a short distance, which included a tricky bit along a slippery inclined ledge, where we managed (just) to avoid falling into the water.

At 0748, it was ‘goodbye’ to Tambo Creek, after having travelled nearly seven kilometres from its junction with the Colo River during all day yesterday and part of the previous day. It had been a memorable journey. This watercourse continues for over 15 more kilometres to its source below Tambo Limb. We had passed above its headwaters during our Complete Wollemi North-South Traverse in 2021, but I had never visited any part of the creek itself until this time.

Our route now was up a steep, rocky, mostly dry gully. A few awkward scrambles were required to push over and around the boulders that were only a little less slippery than Tambo rocks. At 0813, we briefly stopped by a low cave containing stalactites and stalagmites, and straight after that, decided to climb out of

the bottom of the gully to a cliff line just above it, where a ledge was picked up and followed for 80 metres or so, to a 20 metre long very pretty overhang decorated with panels of large tafoni. At 0830.



The exit gully. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Stalactites in a cave. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



Spectacular tafoni in a cave. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Next, the party ascended to top of the cliffs and continued up a sharply inclined slope to the next rock wall, reached 23 minutes later. Traversing below it, we noted a few small, very pretty caves. One of them, in particular, featured a striking example of onion-skin weathering. This sidle eventually brought us back to the original Tambo Creek tributary we had started our morning with, but at a much higher level. At the head of that gully, we were stopped in our tracks by a four metre waterfall, but a ramp was quickly located on the side of it that enabled us to find our way to the top of the escarpment, by 0944.



The cave with onion-skin formations. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

What followed next was a long stretch of the most ludicrously thick and scratchy scrub of this walk so far, with the Lawyer Vine being the key ingredient. Finally, at 1022, we dragged ourselves out of it, making it to the top of the ridge. Here, we crashed down onto the nearest bit of flat and scrub-free ground to have morning tea and recuperate after the shock.

Fifteen minutes later, our journey continued as we followed a spur down and westwards. With only knee-deep vegetation, it felt like a highway compared to the previous bit. Expansive views towards Tambo Creek were not bad either. At 1054, the party reached a saddle. Its southern edge was a continuous rock platform that ended at a 60 metre drop. From the ridiculous to the sublime, as it often happens in the Wollemi.



Tambo Creek views from the escarpment. Photo: Bernard Lo.

Just fifteen minutes later, straight after the end of the saddle, the ridiculous sprang back at us, with a lethal cocktail of Lawyer Vine and Native Raspberry. After a few minutes of that and considering the time of the day, I capitulated and changed our course to climb onto a knoll to the south and walk on top of it rather than exploring at the bottom of the cliff line.

There were more expansive views from the high point along the way, at 1150. Having traversed this knoll, we descended into another saddle. The last bit was a bit tricky due to the only available slot being completely hidden by a large tree.

Between 1255 and 1318, we had lunch on the ridge just after beginning to come down towards Pinchgut Creek. When the break was over, the descent began in seriousness. A beautifully eroded and illuminated overhang was passed at 1340, at a point where the ridge dropped through a ten metre high cliff line. We reached Pinchgut Creek without any real challenges by 1405.

Heading downstream, we tried valiantly for a while to keep out of the water, but soon realised that we had no choice but to accept at least up-to-knee-deep submersion as it was both much safer and much faster. Needless to say, the knee-deep sometimes became waist-deep, especially for the less tall team members. Even though Pinchgut was not as slippery compared to Tambo, care and caution still needed to be exercised with every step.



Henry and Karen wading in Pinchgut Creek. Photo: Ari Shestopal.

Whilst treading through the freezing water and paying attention to slippery rocks, my top-of-the-mind preoccupation was about our route tomorrow, which was completely reliant on reaching the Colo via an unknown pass towards the end of that day. This meant we had to progress as far as possible today, in order to give ourselves maximum chance of success.

At least the sun was now mostly out, making it feel a lot more pleasant. Overall, walking in Pinchgut Creek was quite agreeable and often scenic, but my other worry was that we were not seeing too many suitable camping spots, because both sides of the creek were covered in thick, wet scrub. So, when at 1629, we reached a slightly elevated sandy terrace on the river's bank with a few flat patches and a place to make the fire, I called it the end of the proceedings. Time to set up the camp, with the first priority being making ourselves warm by the fire and attempting to dry our wet gear.

I was happy enough with our progress today, but we all knew tomorrow would have to be a 'Colo or Bust' day.

Day statistics: total distance 8.1 km; total ascent 440 m.

Day 4 – 30 August 2026

The frogs were croaking but the birds were not yet even heard when we woke up extra early, in complete darkness, in order to give ourselves a good start for the day. As luck had it, this was the coldest morning of the entire trip, with only 4 degrees above zero. Putting on my icy socks and shoes, still wet from yesterday, was not very pleasant to say the least, but walking barefoot would have been even less so.

The group departed at 0703 and almost immediately had to step through the first of many knee-deep pools, so the previous conversation about wet socks and shoes immediately became academic. Wherever possible, we walked on river banks, passing a few good-looking (geologically-speaking) caves and also one overhang with enough camping room for two people. Along the way, on one of the boulders, I photographed a glorious cluster of Sydney Rock Orchids, *Thelychiton speciosus*, already in full flower – first such sighting for me this season.



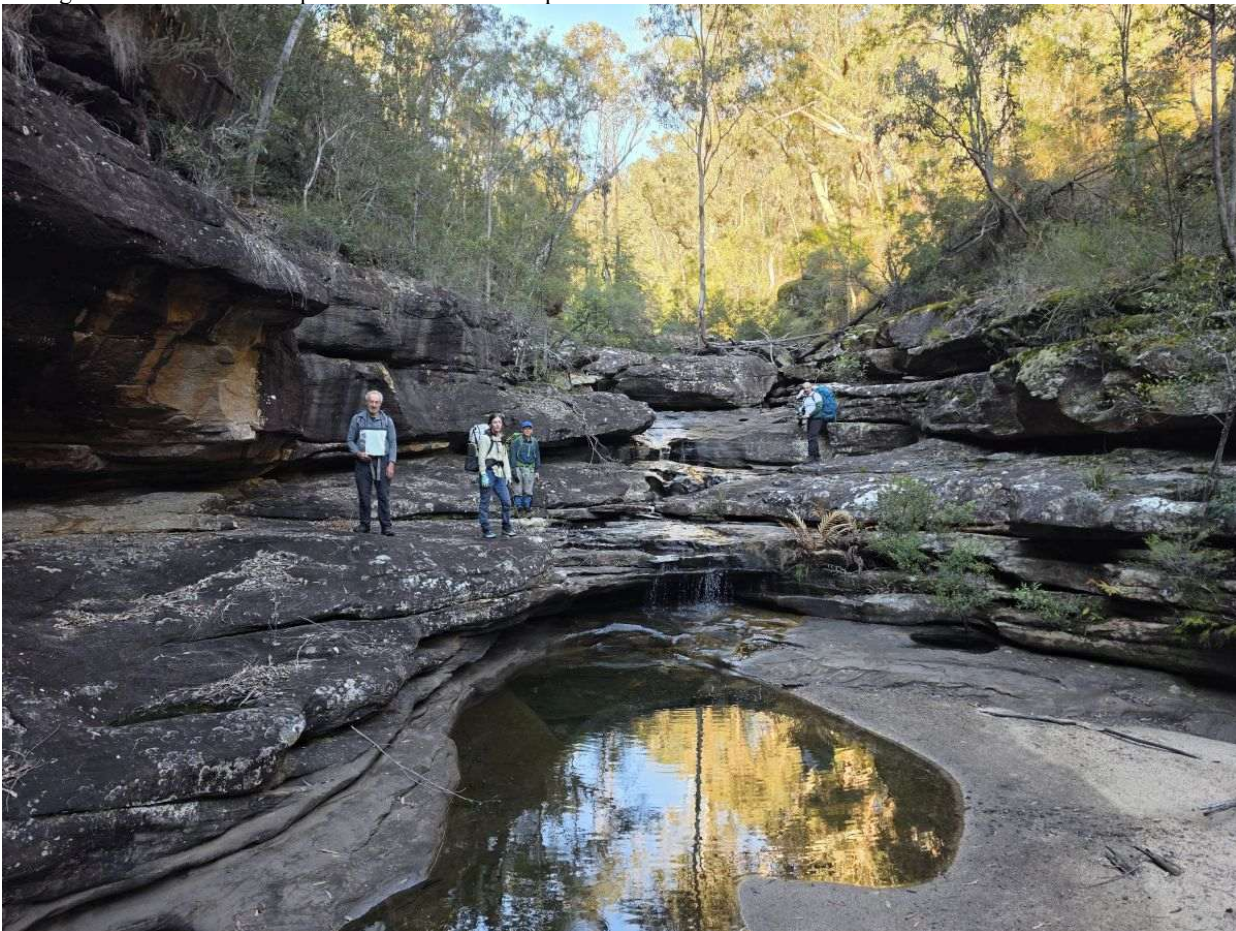
Sydney Rock Orchids, *Thelychiton speciosus*. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

This was followed by a big, scrambly, scratchy climb around a huge pool, because I refused to let people jump across a chasm in between two boulders with a tiny landing spot on the opposite side. My reasoning was that the consequences of missing that goal would be much more severe than the inconvenience of an extra scramble.

At 0751, we traversed a 25 metre long cave with enough space to accommodate us all, but, of course, we did not know about it yesterday, and it took us almost 50 minutes to reach, so I did not feel any regrets. A little further, the gorge changed its character – it became wider, with long flat platforms, big pools and caves on both sides. As our feet were soaked already, we still often chose to walk at the very bottom of the creek, in water.



Pinchgut Creek cascades and pools. Photo: Ari Shestopal.



The group in Pinchgut Creek. Photo: Bernard Lo.



Karen and Henry stepping carefully on wet rocks. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

0831 saw us at another good camping cave, for 2-3 people, on the right-hand side. Soon, after that, Pinchgut Creek became narrow once again, and we negotiated our way through a beautiful constriction, with overhanging boulders forming a mini-tunnel. After that, a log was used to clamber above the debris cluttering the creek bed onto the opposite bank.



Constriction with overhanging boulders forming a small tunnel. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

That brought us to a point where we were going to exit Pinchgut Creek and climb onto the ridge bordering it on the northern side. Whilst planning this expedition, I had decided to proceed this way from here for two reasons. First, Michael Law's advice was that the creek is very slow, slippery and scrubby from here all the

way to the Colo, and, second, I was attracted by an opportunity to change the scenery and explore a new route, which would include finding a pass down to the Colo.

And so it was that, after spending a few minutes here, from 0904 till 0911, taking water for the rest of the day, we began a steep climb to the ridge above. A long handy ramp was soon used to clear the line of bluffs immediately above the ravine. As we paused there on the edge, we were greeted by a sweet Lyrebird song. It was easy and straightforward from there on.

At 0950, the team sat down to morning tea on top of the ridge. Twelve minutes later, we were off pushing through a fair amount of scrub that included at least two kinds of prickly peas. Two Rock Wallabies were seen here, but they quickly disappeared from sight before we could reach for our cameras.

Soon, the ridge narrowed down and rock platforms appeared, giving glimpses into the country below – the Colo River to the north and Pinchgut Creek to the south. I noted a variety of wildflowers – Sunshine Wattle, *Acacia terminalis*, *Gompholobium grandiflorum*, *Dillwynia acicularis*, Native Indigo, *Indigofera australis*, and Native Holly, *Podolobium ilicifolium*; the last one was giving us a lot of trouble due to its thorny leaves. When Devils Twine, *Cassutha pubescens*, was added to the mix, I called for a stop to put my long-sleeve shirt on as it became too painful to be getting new scratches over the scratches from last few days' encounters with the Lawyer Vine and other nasties.

At 1033, we had a quick drink stop at a high point before continuing down into a saddle. Areas of thick scrub alternated with easy-going patches. Lunch was taken between 1156 and 1230 in an attractive rocky spot along the ridge, with some semi-shade.

Twenty minutes after resuming, the party came to a small knoll that was the top of our descent towards the Colo. The initial part of the exercise was via a south east-trending spur, not very steep but covered in all sorts of spiky vegetation. As we progressed, the views towards our destination were getting more and more tantalising. Studying the map during the preparation for this walk, I knew that we should next be looking out for a very steep gully that runs off the spur eastwards. The party reached the top of it at 1304. Staying within this dry narrow ravine for the next 300 m, we quickly lost a lot of elevation, eventually coming out of the constriction to a wide sloping area with no visible cliffs. At 1332.

A drink and a map check was in order. It was here that we needed to leave the first gully and to locate another one, just to the south and downhill from where we were. We were there by 1350. That part of the descent was not hard, but it was even steeper, with lots of loose rocks, so we did sections of it one person-at-a-time. By 1418, the group made it all the way down to the Colo. It was surprisingly easy, non-technical descent, and I would like to call this route Two Gullies Pass.



The Colo River at Two Gullies Pass. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

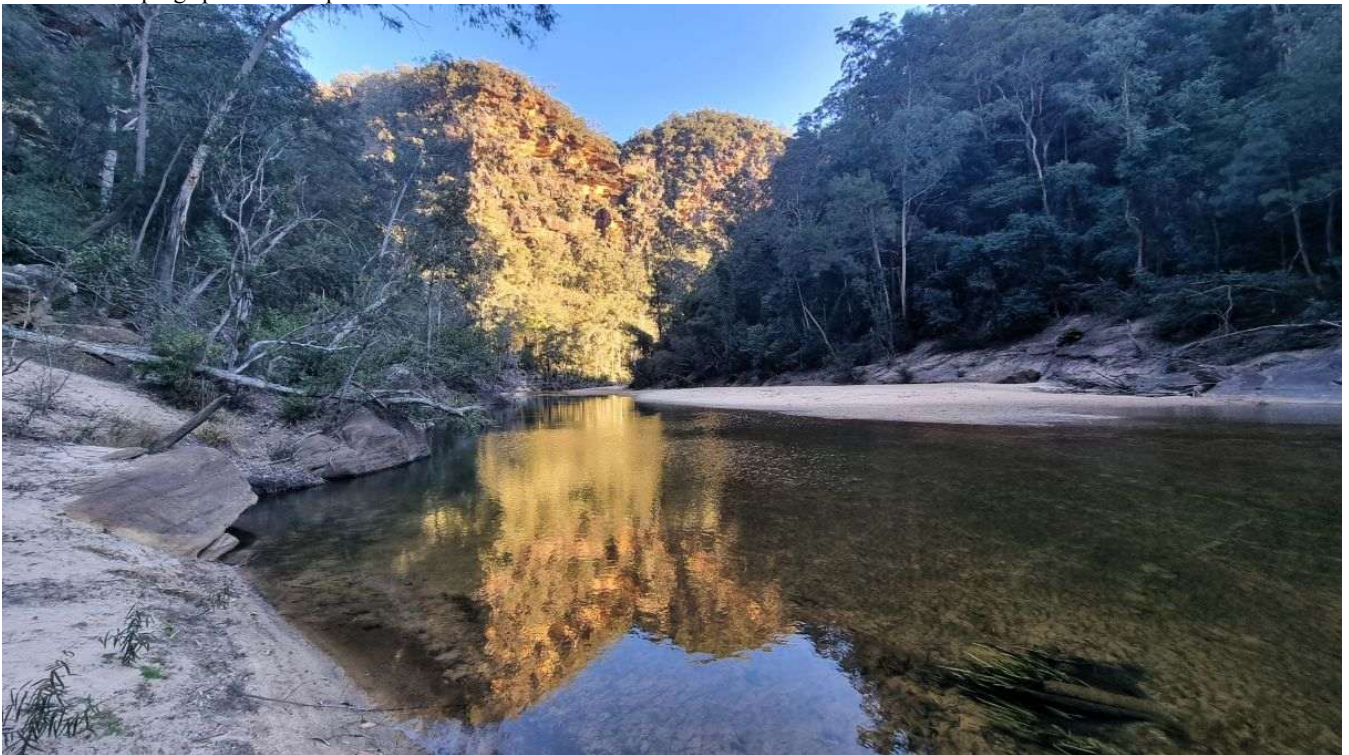
Immediately upstream from where we now stood was a very beautiful, long deep pool, and downstream from it, the river was going through some rapids, so we took the opportunity to cross it here, and this was achieved whilst (mostly) keeping our feet dry.

Once on the other side, the group walked along a bouldery river bank for a short distance, until we reached a large expanse of sand, and 15 metres above it, a large arc-shaped overhang with a great view of the beach and the surrounding hills. It felt like being in a Roman Colosseum, looking down at the arena below. At 1456. A small water dripper was coming down the cliff face in the middle of the cave. Due to the dry conditions, it was only tiny today. The overhang had enough room for two, maybe three, as well as a great spot for a fireplace, surrounded by stone seats. Timber had to be hauled up, but there was plenty of it around. Ari and I slept in the cave, and the others had their tents on the beach below.

I was intending to go for a swim, but by the time the camp was set up, it became quite cool and I chickened out. Ari was the only one of us, I think, who had a quick dip.

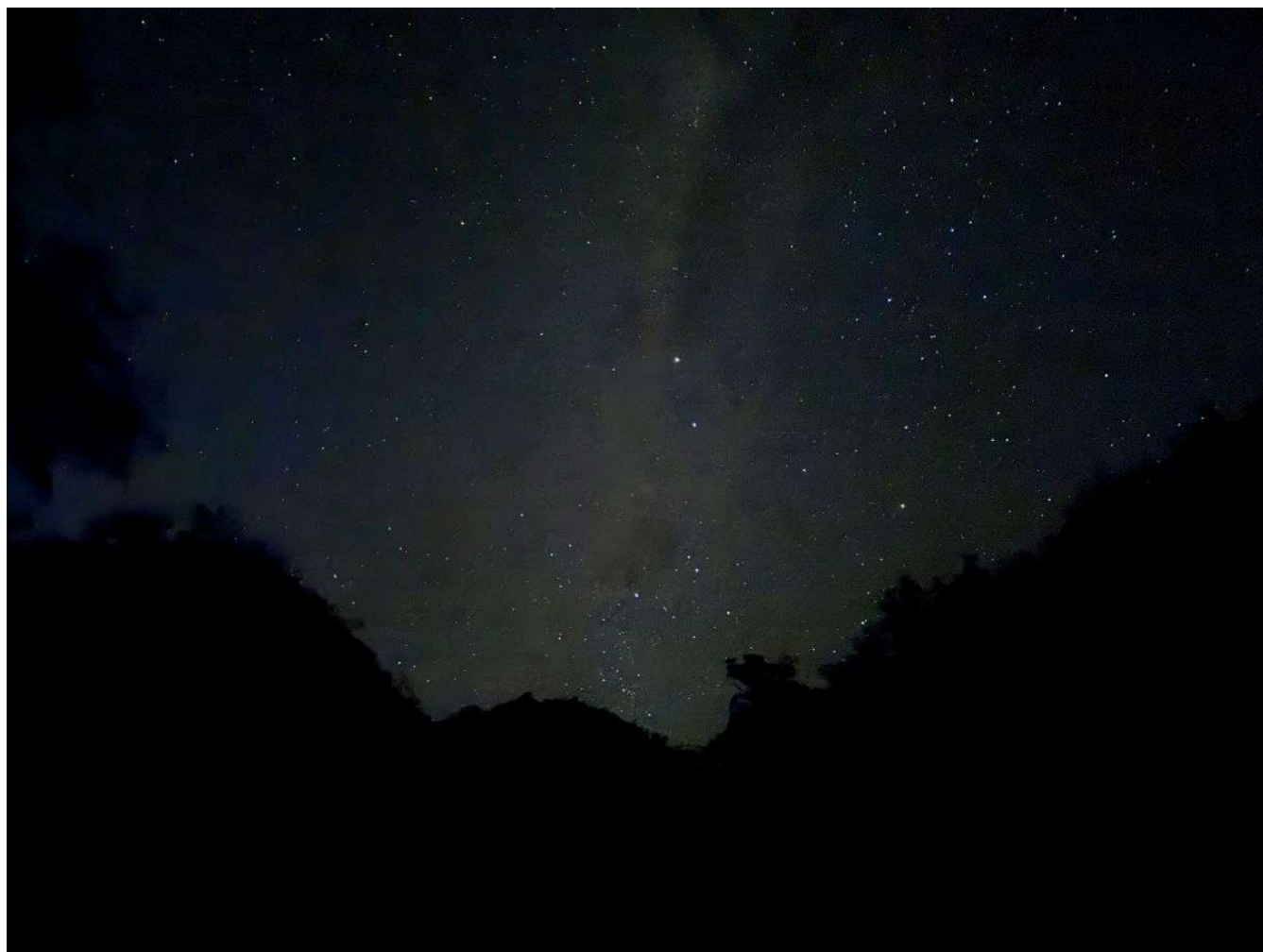


Our final camping spot of the trip. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.



The Colo River late in the afternoon. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Whilst having our dinner in the evening, when it became almost completely dark, it was amazing to look out towards the Colo and see three horizon lines – the bottom one, of the river, the middle one, of the hills on the opposite side, and the top one, of the roof of the cave above us. It was almost impossible to judge what was near and what was far from us. Pure magic.



Night sky in the Colo gorge. Photo: Karen Iorns.

Day statistics: total distance 7.5 km; total ascent 280 m.

Day 5 – 31 August 2026

On the last day of our adventure, we commenced walking at 0733 as we left our top-notch accommodation and made our way downstream along the beach, then in the bush above the river, to reach, at 0745, a tributary ravine coming in from the south east. When planning this walk, I had devised this route independently and based it on Michael Law's advice, but Bernard pointed out to me later that a big part of it is designated as Pass 11a in Brian Corliss's *Colo River Passes and Routes*.



The Colo just downstream from the last camp. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Be it as it may, the group now headed up this very pretty gorge, strewn with huge Moss-and-Lichen-decorated lumps of grey rock. There was no water visible at that point. Only nine minutes later, we arrived at a six metre dry waterfall, which was negotiated via a scramble right through the middle of it. It might have been a different story if the boulders were wet. Above it, I noted the first decent pool of water.



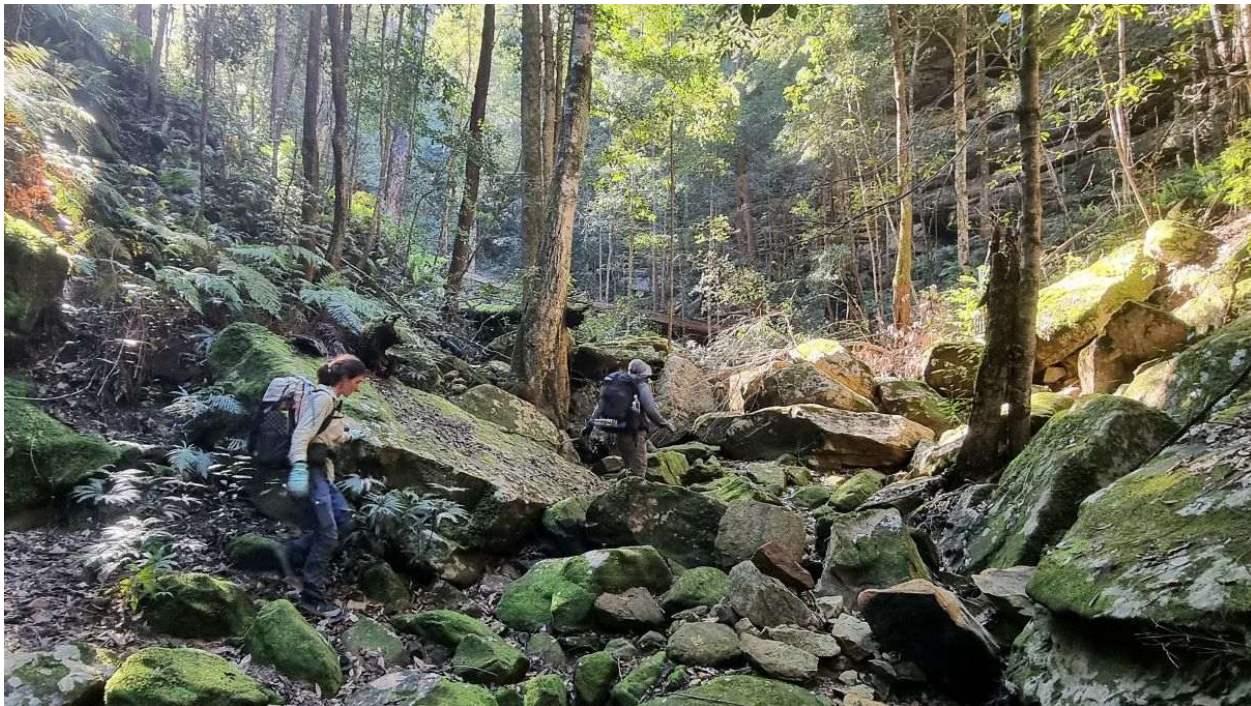
Scrambling up the waterfall. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

Boulder block-ups continued, and weaving our way through them was certainly not boring and often quite challenging. The gorge was a little wider now and featured enormous Mountain Blue Gums as well as many rainforest species. There were abundant Fig Trees here as well, draping the rocks. The creek now had plenty of running water and picturesque still pools. It also felt a lot more slippery underfoot. Soon, the valley became narrow again, and the rate of ascent increased. Enormous walls of sandstone appeared on our left.



Picturesque pools along the way. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The sun was finally able to reach all the way down into the ravine, creating a beautiful dappled light around us. A very pretty cave was next photographed on our right, part of a massive eroded wall that stretched for about one hundred metres. A rock arrangement was found in a cave nearby on the right-hand side, but the consensus was that it was not Aboriginal. At 0935. That was followed by another remarkable overhang with honeycomb roof; some of the formations had fallen down and were now adorning the floor.



Dappled light in the ravine. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

The journey up this unnamed ravine had been a very enjoyable one, but it was now coming to an end. By 0955, we found ourselves about 20 metres above the creek bed, just above its junction with a minor tributary that I had been planning for our exit towards the tops. The problem was, the ledge we were walking on suddenly terminated at a big drop. A 3-4 metre high wall at the end of this narrow walkway needed to be scaled to continue. Bernard managed to climb via a narrow gully a little distance before this point, but I thought it was too risky for the rest of the group. I took my pack off and scrambled up, with considerable difficulty, near the spot where we stopped, joining Bernard above the obstacle. There were no good anchors nearby, so we had to connect Bernard's 10 metre rope and my 15 metre tape, to be used to first haul the packs up and then for the remaining three members of the team. All this took us seventeen minutes.

Two more scrambles were required before we could clear this line of cliffs. Next, we passed by a very beautiful cave with well-developed honeycomb formations, and very soon after that, at 1029, sat down for a belated morning tea. We were on a north east-facing slope, and sun here felt very hot, but a few small trees created just enough shade for all of us to enjoy our break.



Beautiful honeycomb formations in this cave. Photo: Yuri Bolotin.

At 1045, we were on the move again, now climbing steeply, to reach the next continuous wall eleven minutes later. It mainly consisted of flat brown sandstone, with a couple of small caves over the distance of about 300 m that we spent traversing underneath it.

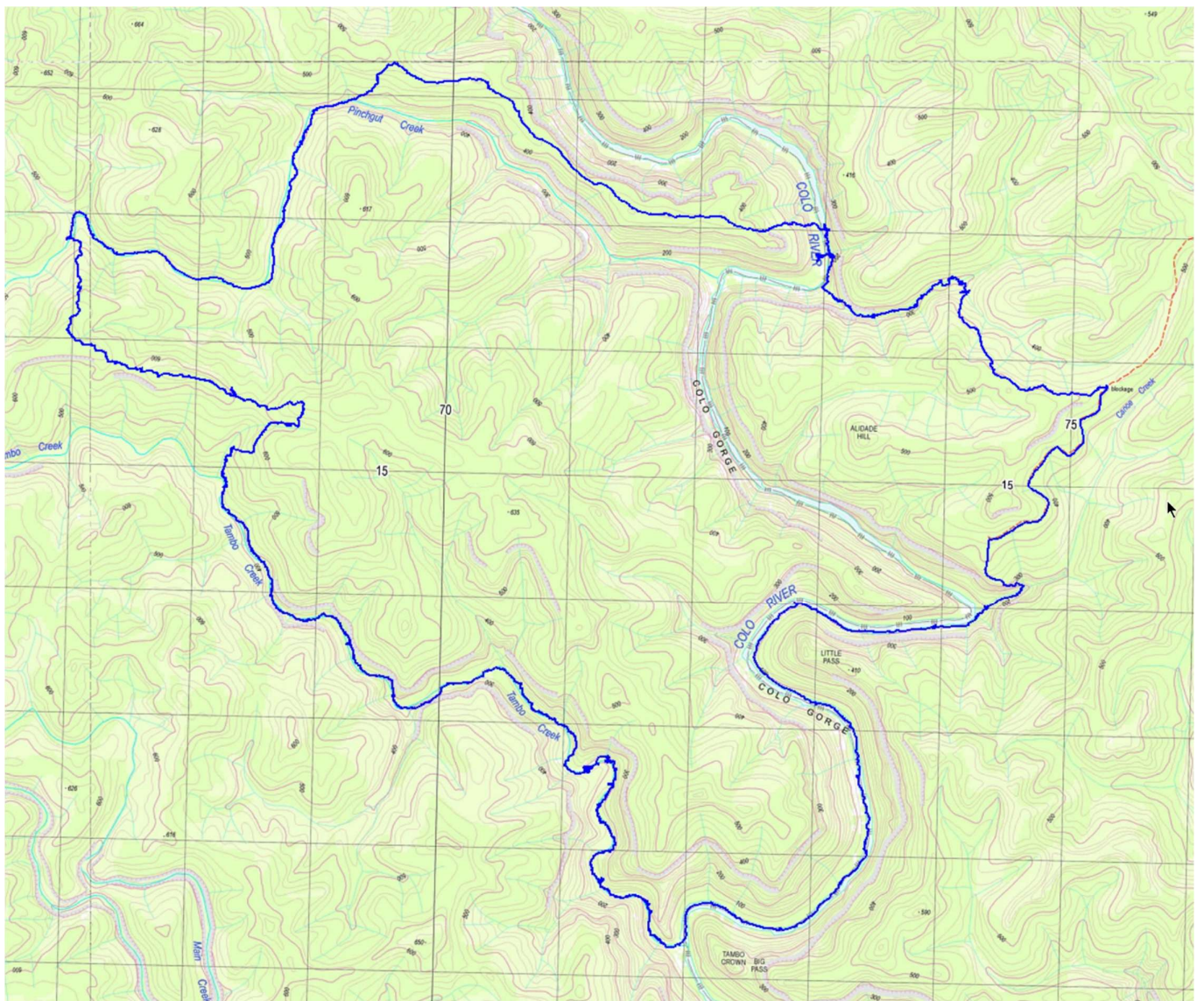
The next vigorous climb brought us to the last cliff line of the day, at 1135. We followed it for almost a kilometre, until 1223. It was pretty but lacked fine erosion details we were looking out for. There were also no caves along the entire distance.

For the last 150 metres of the trip, we were following a narrow spur downhill, to reach our parked vehicles at 1232.

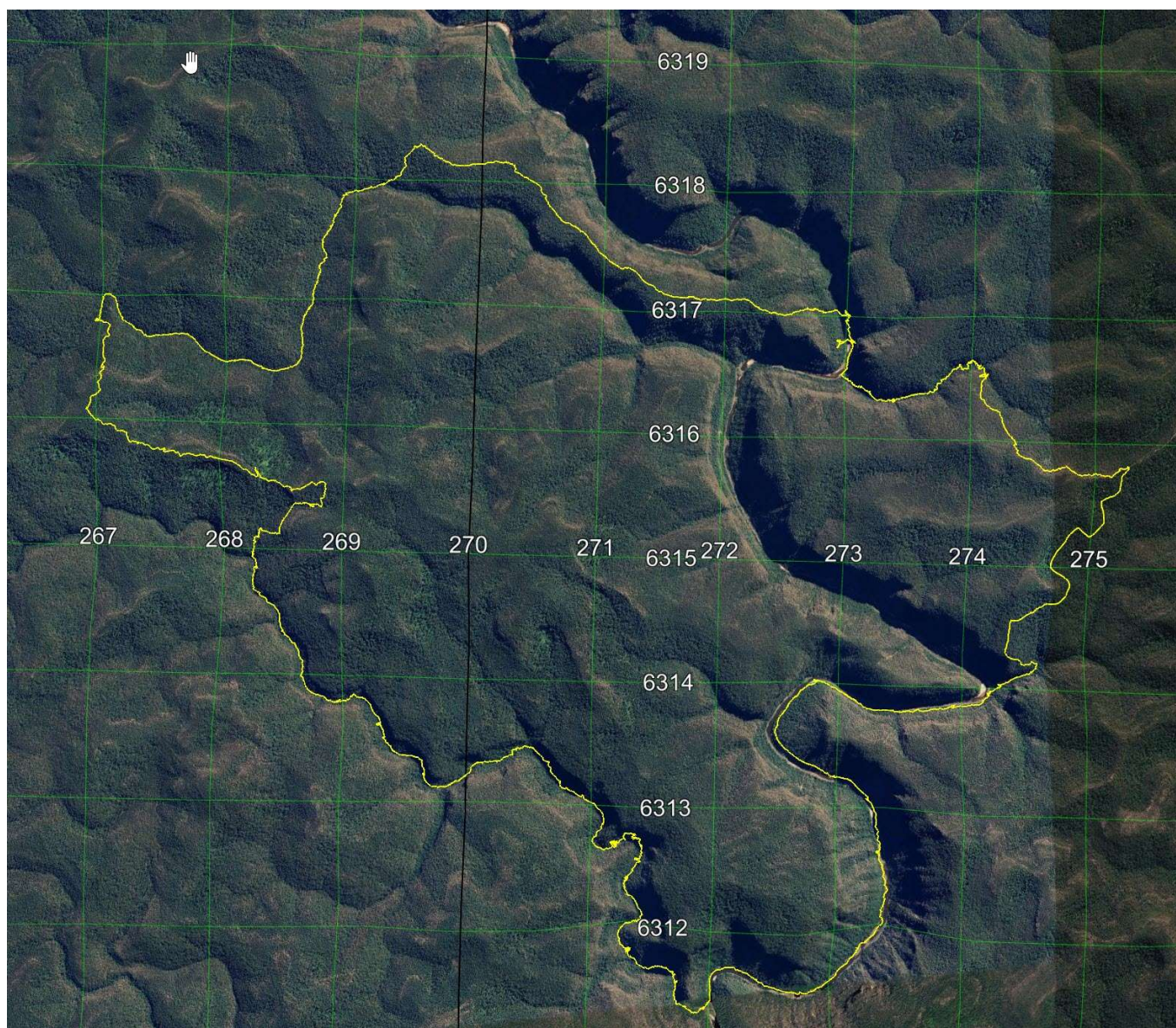
Before finishing these track notes, I must give special thank you to Ari for making nice hot fire for the group every single morning, before everyone got up. On my pack walks, I normally do not have fire in the mornings unless someone volunteers to wake up extra early to organise it.

Day statistics: total distance 4.6 km; total ascent 444 m.

Trip statistics: total distance 35.5 km; total ascent 1,730 m.



Walk topographic map. Recorded and prepared by Yuri Bolotin.



Walk aerial map. Recorded and prepared by Yuri Bolotin.

Table of Times, Locations and Grid References

Time	Location	Grid Reference	Elevation
Day 1 – 27 August 2026			
0830	Cars parked and started walking	GR 7527 1581	460 m
0912	Start of the track	GR 7437 1456	430 m
0940	Canoe Creek	GR 7463 1416	160 m
0955	Colo River	GR 7436 1402	110 m
1006-1018	Morning tea	GR 7428 1394	100 m
1135	Rapids	GR 7259 1345	98 m
1210	Crossed the Colo	GR 7328 1304	85 m
1231-1255	Lunch	GR 7335 1263	75 m
1434	Tambo Creek junction	GR 7196 1128	70 m
1605	Camp 1	GR 7133 1175	130 m

Day 2 – 28 August 2026			
0742	Left Camp 1	GR 7133 1175	130 m
0848	Large pool	GR 7130 1236	160 m
0914-0921	Tambo Wall	GR 7140 1257	200 m
1006-1024	Morning tea	GR 7119 1264	210 m
1043	Camping cave	GR 7110 1282	240 m
1242-1315	Lunch	GR 6963 1320	290 m
1520	Cave	GR 6846 1441	400 m
1600	Camp 2	GR 6825 1486	420 m
Day 3 – 29 August 2026			
0735	Left Camp 2	GR 6825 1486	420 m
0748	Exited Tambo Creek	GR 6822 1495	440 m
0813	Cave with stalactites and stalagmites	GR 6825 1508	480 m
0830	Overhang	GR 6829 1515	490 m
0853	Rock wall	GR 6847 1514	560 m
0944	Top of the escarpment	GR 6873 1536	590 m
1022-1037	Top of the ridge, morning tea	GR 6883 1554	660 m
1054	Saddle	GR 6852 1550	590 m
1109	End of saddle, scrub	GR 6831 1560	595 m
1150	Top of the knoll, views	GR 6781 1573	650 m
1255-1318	Lunch	GR 6696 1608	630 m
1340	Overhang	GR 6704 1643	575 m
1405	Pinchgut Creek	GR 6696 1680	450 m
1629	Camp 3	GR 6863 1694	425 m
Day 4 – 30 August 2026			
0703	Left Camp 3	GR 6863 1694	425 m
0751	Camping cave	GR 6875 1734	418 m
0831	Camping cave	GR 6886 1779	400 m
0904-0911	Taking water. Exited Pinchgut Creek.	GR 6922 1797	360 m
0950-1002	Top of the ridge, morning tea	GR 6955 1826	490 m
1033	High point	GR 7020 1815	440 m
1156-1230	Lunch	GR 7170 1711	445 m
1250	Top of descent	GR 7219 1709	440 m
1304	Top of first gully. Top of the Two Gullies Pass.	GR 7243 1699	405 m
1332	Bottom of first gully	GR 7273 1706	280 m
1350	Top of the second gully	GR 7281 1704	220 m
1418	Colo River, crossing. Bottom of the Two Gullies Pass.	GR 7296 1701	110 m
1456	Camp 4	GR 7305 1681	100 m (Colo beach)
Day 5 – 31 August 2026			
0733	Left Camp 4	GR 7305 1681	100 m

0745	Start of the ascent ravine	GR 7299 1655	98 m
0754	Waterfall climb	GR 7309 1646	180 m
0935	Cave	GR 7393 1660	280 m
0955-1012	Tape-assisted climb	GR 7409 1662	300 m
1029-1045	Morning tea	GR 7414 1654	320 m
1056	Cliff line	GR 7409 1634	400 m
1135	Cliff line	GR 7440 1588	500 m
1223	End of the traverse	GR 7514 1573	485 m
1232	Vehicles	GR 7527 1581	460 m