



The Overland Track the highlights

By **CHARLIE BANIAS** and **THOMAS WOODMAN**

In January 2020, Scouts from 1st North Balwyn and 1st Greythorn Park completed the Overland Track, a six-day hike in Tasmania. Every great journey starts with a single step and we held our first training hike for the Overland at Werribee Gorge back in February 2019. Some 300kms of hiking later and more than a few hours of planning meant we were fully prepared for the best and worst of what Tassie could send our way. We know that no one wants to hear a boring synopsis of a hike so instead we offer the following 'highlights reel':

Scout Hut - Day 0

We spent our first night in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Claire National Park at "The Scout Hut" (B-P Lodge). This amazing Scouting asset is a short but very steep climb from the Ronny Creek shuttle bus stop. It has comfortable bunk-style accommodation along with a great kitchen and outdoor barbecues. Swapping a thermarest for a bunk and a burger instead of freeze-dried was a great way to start. Even if you don't intend to walk the Overland it makes a great base for day hiking.

Cradle Mountain - Day 1

One of the most famous climbs of the Overland is

Cradle Mountain, an impressive piece of geology whether from a distance or up close. Unfortunately we didn't quite make the summit, however the rock scrambling was a lot of fun. It got us out of our comfort zones, and we were fortunate enough to get a good view of the track ahead before the weather closed in.

That Front - Day 1

After getting down from Cradle the weather turned and turned fast. We still had a way to walk to the Waterfall Valley campsite. The wind picked up to 60-70km/h and the temperature dropped sharply. Soon the heavens opened and we had a mixture of rain and sleet. We tightened the hoods on our jackets and trekked on. It was exhilarating but only because we were prepared. We heard later that two families who were also hiking the Overland, got separated in the conditions but were re-united at Scott Kilvert Hut. One of the party had a mild case of hypothermia.

Lake Wills/Innes Falls - Day 2

Conditions the next day prevented us from climbing Barn Bluff so we visited Lake Will instead. Due to the strong winds there were plenty of white caps and small waves breaking on the lake's sandy white shores. At the prompting of one of the Scouts, Michael, it was decided that we all walk around the lake to Inness Falls. While a little smaller than the waterfalls further along the track, it was very pretty and definitely worth the effort.

Mt Ossa - Day 4

The Overland Track has many incredible climbs but it is hard to beat Mt Ossa, the tallest mountain in Tasmania. We were

lucky enough to get every member of our group of 23 up to the summit. As a bonus when we got to the top we were greeted with a massive snow drift, perfect to cool off after a hot climb. The views from the top of Mt Ossa were spectacular and visibility was superb. In the distance we could see Frenchman's Cap... another day. As a reminder that you can never take anything for granted, 30 minutes after our descent from Mt Ossa, a gentle northerly breeze blew smoke from a fire burning 40km north of Cradle Mountain and the views were gone.

The Waterfalls - Day 5

On day five we were lucky enough to check out D'Alton Falls, Fergusson Falls and Hartnett Falls. They all offered superb views as the weather was spectacular that day even if a little smokey from the fires. We had a very refreshing short swim at Hartnett falls.

Other Highlights

- Pelion West Ridge - four Scouts, two Rovers
- Pelion East - three Scouts
- Around Lake St Clair - five Scouts, one Rover

Final Thoughts - Day 5

The Overland Track was an unforgettable experience for everyone involved, through the trials and tribulations we all became better people, as well as better friends. This trip will always take a special place in our hearts.

Charlie Banias and Thomas Woodman are Scouts at 1st North Balwyn.

Training Hikes

Training for the Overland Track included 140kms hiking at

- Werribee Gorge
- Scout Hike
- You Yangs
- Dandenong Ranges
- Beeripmo Walk
- Cathedral Ranges
- Tanglefoot
- High plains
- plus three Green Cord hikes (a further 90kms)
- plus skiing, cycling and caving weekends.

