Gold Coast Hinterland Great Walk

Walk through lush Gondwana rainforest and along the rim of an ancient, eroded volcano on this spectacular series of day walks. The trail traverses a landscape as old as the dinosaurs, linking World Heritage-listed Lamington and Springbrook plateaux with Egg Rock and Turtle Rock in the scenic Numinbah Valley. See the Tweed Volcano, which erupted around 25 million years ago and the powerful, crystal-clear streams and waterfalls that continue to erode it today. Explore Woonoongoora, known to the local Yugambeh people as ‘Queen of the Mountains’. Learn their ancient ancestral legends of how the rivers and valleys were formed. Camp in the rainforest at Green Mountains, Woonoongoora and The Settlement or in the private camping area at Binna Burra. The best time to walk this track is between March and October, when temperatures are milder.

SECTION ONE

GREEN MOUNTAINS (O’REILLY) TO BINNA BURRA

The Border Track winds for 21.4km (13.3 miles) between the Binna Burra and Green Mountains sections of the Lamington National Park. Climb through the Tweed Volcano’s highest remaining basalt lavas, watching the rainforest change with altitude. As you move from warm to cool subtropical rainforest, the strangler figs, palms and ferns make way for hoop pines and Tarzan-like vines. On the higher planes, you’ll find coachwood trees, ancient flowering plants and the southern beech. Stare out over the rainforest from the track’s lookout.

On a clear day you can see to Mount Warning, the distant Nightcap Range, the Lamington wilderness area and the Tweed Range. Look out for platypus, bandicoots, wallabies, pademelon, pygmy possums and a wild array of birds. You’ll see bowerbirds and scrub turkeys darting across the forest floor, wedge-tailed eagles prowling for food and cockatoos, rosella and lorikeets chorusing confidently from the trees. At Binna Burra’s privately-owned campsite, you can pitch your own tent, book a safari-style tent onsite or take a room in a rustic cabin.

Queensland and New South Wales

Green Mountains (O’Reilly) – Binna Burra – Woonoongoora walkers’ camp – The Settlement

AT A GLANCE

- Green Mountains (O’Reilly) to Binna Burra – 21.4km (13.3 miles)
- Binna Burra to Woonoongoora walkers’ camp – 19.5km (12.1 miles)
- Woonoongoora walkers’ camp to The Settlement – 13km (8 miles)
SECTION TWO AND THREE

BINNA BURRA TO WOONOONGOORA WALKERS’ CAMP

This moderate 19.5km (12.1 mile) section begins just beneath the Binna Burra campground. Head downwards through cliff lines of volcanic rock and ash, then branch left on to the Lower Bellbird circuit track. Curve around the cliff base and past a patch of dry rainforest that exemplifies the flora now widespread throughout Australia. Turn right at the Great Walk track junction, and continue east into Kurraragin Valley, past stands of piccabeen palm, large red cedar and graceful flooded gum. As you trail Egg Rock Creek, you’ll see the towering form of Egg Rock or Kurraragin (meaning ‘very tall’) through the trees in the distance. According to Yugambeh legend, Kurraragin was a giant who battled the enormous landforms around him to become king of all the mountains. From Egg Rock Creek, veer left along Nixon Creek, then north-east through selectively cleared woodland. Stop at the Nerang-Murwillumbah Road in Numinbah Valley or continue on to the Woonoongoora walkers’ camp in the Springbrook Conservation Area.

WOONOONGOORA WALKERS’ CAMP TO THE SETTLEMENT

This 13km (8 mile) section heads up to the Springbrook plateau, then down into the natural amphitheatre of Waterfall Creek valley. More than 900 steps wind you upwards, past groves of ancient cyads, to a plateau where only tall eucalypts grow. Catch your breath in Apple Tree Park, then cross the Springbrook Road and travel down into the catchment of Little Nerang Dam. Tackle the slippery crossing at Little Nerang Creek with care. Then climb up the side of a narrow gorge, where waterfalls and pools carve through older rocks from beneath the ancient volcano. Stop at Warringa Pool to swim, relax and enjoy the rainforest symphony. Continue to Purling Brook Falls, where a cream-coloured cliff looms in stark contrast over the deep black gorge beneath it. Creep behind the falls, then do the steady climb back to the top of the plateau. The track branches left to the Settlement campground just before the top of Purling Brook.