

Blue Mountains Drive **DISCOVERY TRAIL**

This Discovery Trail is well known as an ‘edge-of-the-world’ drive around the cliff-tops, packed full of lookouts, picnic areas and walking tracks. It is located right alongside lots of galleries, cafes, gardens attractions and accommodation. Highlights of the drive include visiting Echo Point and the Three Sisters, Sublime Point and the Wentworth Falls Picnic Area and its associated lookouts.

Route Description

Begin on the western side of Katoomba, at the intersection of Valley Road and Bathurst Road. Travel south where this road changes to Narrow Neck Road and turn right into Cliff Drive, following it round to Cahills Lookout, back out to Narrow Neck Road and round to Narrow Neck Lookout. A drive along Narrow Neck via Glenraphael Drive is a scenic diversion, or continue along Cliff Drive to Hildas Lookout, Cyclorama Point and Scenic World with its rides offering both scenic views and easy access to the valley below.

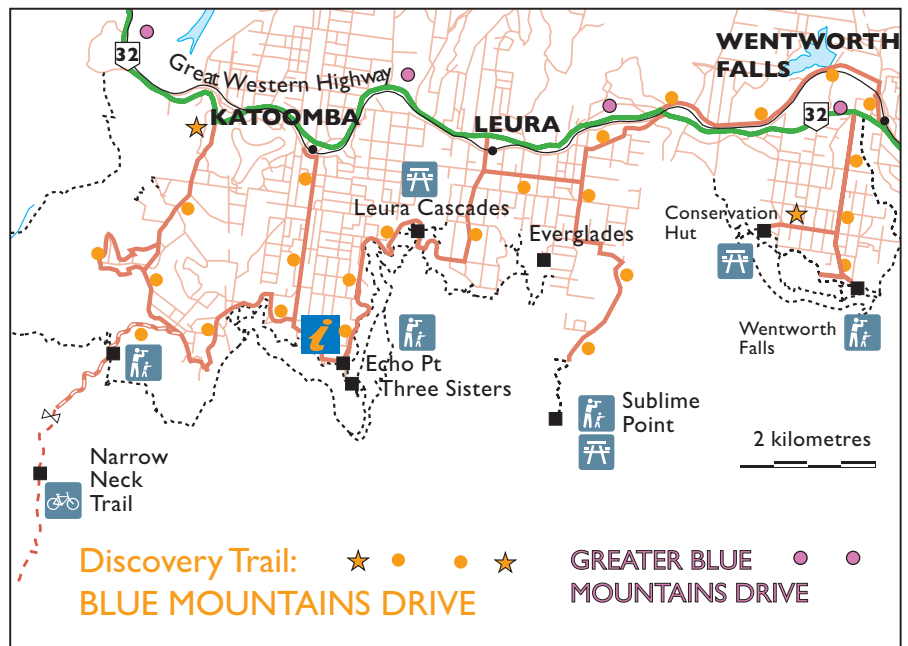
The next stop is Katoomba Falls Picnic Area, a trackhead for the walking track network, then Echo Point with the Accredited Visitor Information Centre and the famous view to the Three Sisters and Mount Solitary.

Be sure not to miss the Echo Point Accredited Visitor Information Centre with its information resources and gift shop. Cliff Drive proceeds round the edge of the bush to Leura Cascades Park – another walking trackhead. From here follow the road on and veer right into Olympic Parade which leads to Gordon Falls Reserve. From the reserve, backtrack slightly and turn right into Leura Mall then right into Craigend Street.

Follow the signs down to Everglades. Return to Fitzroy St and follow this to Watkins Rd and then on to Sublime Pt Road and Sublime Point.

Drive summary

- 36 km (one way), 1 hr to drive (one way) plus stops
- Sealed suburban roads
- Start: Katoomba Finish: The Valley of the Waters (Wentworth Falls)
- Alerts!: Busy suburban streets with many intersections.



— Sealed road — Unsealed road - - - Firetrail Walking track

After a short walk to this majestic view, the trail follows the signs to Sydney, back out to the Great Western Highway.

Turn left at the highway, go under the railway underpass and then immediately right. Follow the signs along Sinclair Crescent to Wentworth Falls Lake – a peaceful spot with picnic facilities, childrens’ play equipment and canoeing opportunities.

Continuing along Sinclair Crescent, turn right at the intersection with Blaxland Road, into the Wentworth Falls village centre.

At the highway, turn right, then at the next traffic lights turn left into Falls Road and down to Wentworth Falls Picnic Area with its lookouts and walking tracks.

The final stop is The Valley of the Waters Picnic Area and café, reached by driving a short way back along Falls Road and turning left into Fletcher Street.

This Discovery Trail is a great day out with time to enjoy some key short walks, such as Katoomba Falls, Leura Cascades, Sublime Point and Princes Rock (at Wentworth Falls).



Blue Mountains Drive **DISCOVERY TRAIL: things to see and do**

Most of the discovery trails branching out from the Greater Blue Mountains Drive could be described as leisurely country cruises, but the Blue Mountains Drive Discovery Trail is more intense and far from remote. It makes up for the wide open spaces by packing in a smorgasbord of views, picnic places, walking tracks, waterfalls and lookouts – including many of the classic sights of the central Blue Mountains. The drive hugs the top of the escarpment most of the way from Katoomba to Wentworth Falls, hovering between the world of nature on one hand and cultured villages on the other.

This tour is so friendly that it could be followed with a street directory and the local tourist drive signs. But to get the most out of all the places along the way it's wise to pick up detailed brochures – and they're particularly helpful for selecting and safely enjoying a few walking tracks.

The villages offer all the sensual pleasures of cafes and galleries that can be dipped into at any time along the way, while on nature's side of the drive, there are so many cliff-top attractions that you might have to pick and choose how many you indulge! They include famous Blue Mountains sites – icons of the World Heritage Area - as well as some out-of-the-way and quieter spots. With such a variety of activities on offer, this is a perfect day out for the family and can be enjoyed in almost any weather.

First up out of Katoomba is Cahills Lookout. A short walk reveals a western panorama of the Megalong Valley, with its patchwork of bush and farmland and the Great Divide on the horizon. Close by is the ironstone-fretted formation of Boars Head Rock and the cliff-bound Narrow Neck Peninsula reaching into the southern wilderness of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

If you don't mind a bit of dirt, the drive along the first part of Narrow Neck is an interesting diversion, and the trail beyond the locked gate is a spectacular and popular mountain bike ride. Views back to the main escarpment take in the yellow bluff of Dog Face that was sheared off when a massive hunk of cliff fell down in 1931, probably triggered by historic coal-mining beneath. Like a golden mirror, Dog Face catches the last light of sunset, and the slope below is strewn with tumbled debris.

Back on the 'mainland', a vista opens out from Cyclorama Point in both directions along the escarpment, while the nearby

Landslide Lookout peers straight down the awesome wall of Dog Face. Lookouts like this can be quite amazing in wet weather. Swirling clouds and tendrils of mist snake through the valley, giving real meaning to that word 'atmospheric', while the forest below is a dappled mosaic of rich colours.

Even thick mist is to be enjoyed, when the cliffs plunge into fog-shrouded mystery and bird calls rise from the hidden deeps. Fog highlights the colours and textures of the escarpment vegetation, a complex mix of windswept heath, twisty gums and fern-filled glades of tall trees and rainforest. The Blue Mountains is no place to stay indoors until the sun comes out!

The discovery trail follows Cliff Drive eastward along the escarpment, around the rim of the forest-filled Jamison and Kedumba valleys. It weaves in and out of a series of gullies, each with its own picnic area and walking tracks, punctuated by waterfalls tumbling down the cliff, headland lookouts and informative signs. The valley amphitheatre is a frequent backdrop with the shapely mesa of Mount Solitary beyond.

Katoomba Falls Park, Leura Cascades Park, Sublime Point, Wentworth Falls Lake, Wentworth Falls Picnic Area and Valley of the Waters Picnic Area are the main natural sites, but most people will reckon Scenic World and Echo Point are also essential stops.

Scenic World rides provide unique perspectives on the cliffline landscapes. In addition to its renowned cross valley cable car and two other rides connecting with the valley below it offers lovely walks through the lush valley forests along a boardwalk.

Around from here, the nearby famously vertiginous scene from Echo Point gets up close to the Three Sisters. This is Gundungurra country, and local Aboriginal stories are highlighted in the interpretation that features in the 'plaza' at Echo Point. And of course a drop-in at the Visitor Information Centre is a must.

Walking opportunities abound along the escarpment, from cliff-top strolls of a few minutes to challenging descents down those cliffs into the valley. Relatively easy but very scenic walks winding around the cliff-tops include Katoomba Falls to Echo Point, Echo

Point to the Three Sisters, the Prince Henry Cliff Walk, Leura Cascades and Sublime Point.

If you're lucky enough to have a helpful driver, you could get dropped off and picked up further along, after striding several kilometres around the rim of cliffs. Alternatively you can catch the regular Blue Mountains Explorer bus or Trolley bus to shuttle between locations.

Fit walkers will also enjoy the tracks into the valley that range up to about four hours in length. Some of the best are the Giant Stairway, Fern Bower, Valley of the Waters and National Pass. You can even plan some rambles to end at Scenic World and avoid the climb back up.

There are so many picnic sites that it's a tough choice where to stop. The kids might vote for one of the picnic areas with play equipment or gas barbecues, while adults could well prefer a village stopover. The drive passes close to the Katoomba shops and through the village centres of Leura and Wentworth Falls, with many cafes, restaurants and galleries along the way.

Wentworth Falls Lake is set on the plateau well back from the cliff-edge and so has a spacious picnic area. Outdoor sandstone sculptures, waterbirds and the lake itself are bonus attractions – especially in summer when a spot of canoeing might appeal.

The tour concludes with Wentworth Falls Picnic Area and then its sister locale at The Valley of the Waters, both within Blue Mountains National Park. Linked by a fabulous network of walking tracks at three different levels on the escarpment, these two areas are quite different in character. Wentworth Falls has lookouts and a large picnic area with barbecues, while The Valley of the Waters has the Conservation Hut Café (and its ongoing historic linkage with the Blue Mountains Conservation Society).

The Conservation Hut was designed to be environment-friendly, back when that was quite a radical idea. There's nothing better after a great day out than relaxing there with a cup of your favourite beverage, gazing out at tree-filtered views of the magical Blue Mountains.

The **Greater Blue** Mountains Drive has been established by the regions which share the mountains as their own backyard working together to develop the drive in collaboration with the NSW Dept of Environment and Climate Change, Tourism NSW and Tourism Australia. Further development of the drive product has been enhanced by the ongoing involvement of Transurban. The establishment of the drive was proudly supported by the Australian Government and its business program delivery division, AusIndustry in a program proposed and developed by Blue Mountains Tourism Limited. © 2007

This project is proudly supported by



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