

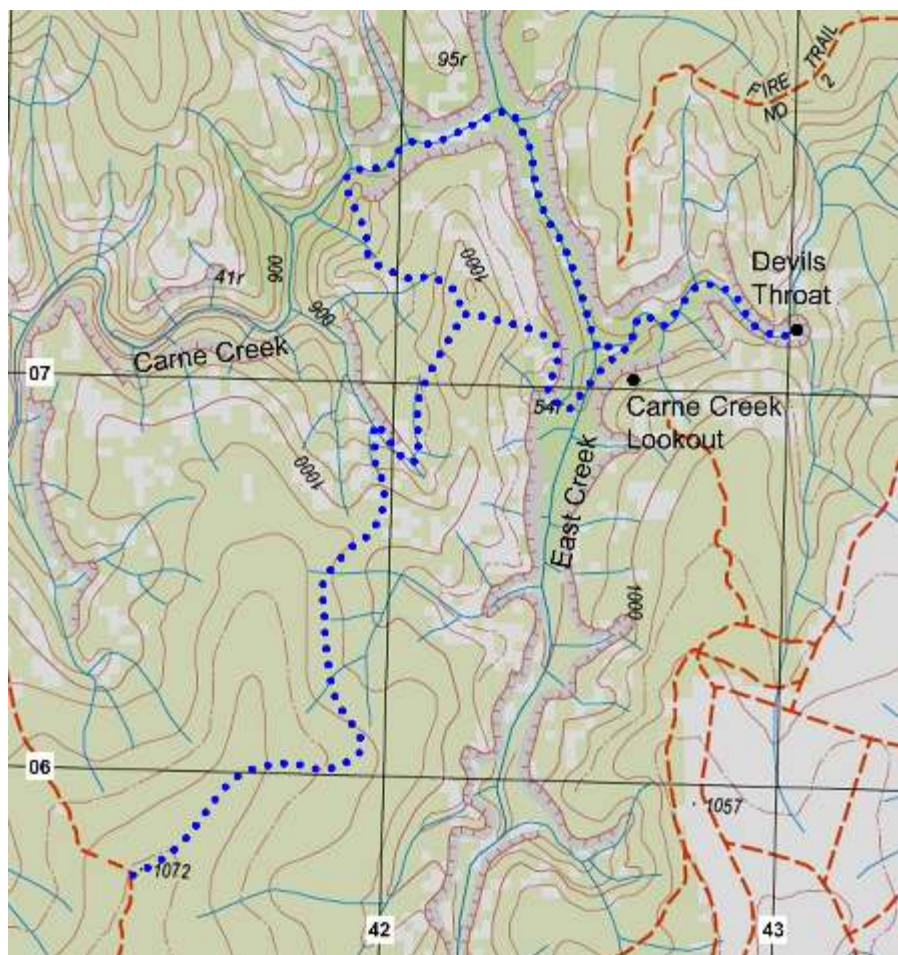
## 6.33 Devils Throat and the cliffs of East Creek

### MAPS ETC.

Department of Lands topographic map Cullen Bullen, 8931-3N, 1:25000, second edition. GPS setting WGS 84.

### WALK DESCRIPTION AND ROUTE

Park cars at spot height 1072, GR 413 058 and follow an old fire trail north east, then a motor bike track, to approximately GR 422 072. Drop down a ridge and to the left of a gully into East Creek. Head east into Camp Creek





Don't slip. Photo: Yuri Bolotin



Checking out the inside of the Devils Throat. Photo: Emanuel Conomos



gorge and visit the amazing Devils Throat. Return to East Creek; follow it north to the junction with Carne Creek. Take the motor bike track at GR 418 074 to return to the cars. About 10km.

## GEAR ISSUES

GPS, PLB, appropriate head and footwear, electrolytes, maps, compass, 2 litres of water. The leader will carry a tape. Have clothes to change into in the car for afterwards.

## COMMENTS

Exploratory. Wet feet and most likely more. Scrambling and exposure guaranteed, as is stunning scenery. About 9-12k. This will be a long, hard and spectacular day.

Date walked 15th April 2013.

## THE WEATHER

It was a very warm dry day with variable cloud cover, some smoke haze; temperature range 17 to 22 degrees C.



Above the eastern side of East Creek. Photo: Brian Fox



Where is Brian Fox going with the camera? Photo: Yuri Bolotin

## BACKGROUND NOTES

The Devils Throat is a challenge to describe. It is part canyon at the top; however, near the cliff edge, a very deep sinkhole has been cut through the rock by Camp Creek into a vertical cylinder to a depth of about 15m. At the base, the force of the falling and swirling water has found a zone of weakness in some horizontal strata and removed this, creating a 'mouth' from which water flows out onto a sloping apron. The force of water has also over deepened the sinkhole below the mouth, creating a pool estimated at more than 3m deep. Up close, the noise of the falling water is an assault to the ears. The feature has an aura, making it a world class example of its kind. Like so much of the Carne Creek catchment, it is not protected and urgently requires transferring to the Gardens of Stone National Park. The Devils Throat is a feature of international significance. The Devils Throat is also known as Alcatraz Canyon to the canyoning fraternity.

## TRACK NOTES

At 0849, the vehicles were parked at GR 414 058, gear requirements were reviewed, and some packs were lightened. We set off along a motor bike track that provides an easy but convoluted route towards Carne Creek, crossing it at approximately GR 417 074. This track was followed for several kilometres to a high point, at GR 420 067. We stopped here to admire the views both north west and north east. The north west views include

spectacular cliffs on Carne Creek and the Glory Box. To the north east, sections of two fire trails on either side of Camp Creek could be seen. Our destination, the Devils Throat, is located in a deep gorge, where Camp Creek plunges over the cliff edge. After photos, we continued on our way north.

A high point at GR 422 072 on the bike track defines the spot where we headed due east. It was now 0933. Each step east revealed increasing views of the cliffs of East Creek, so by the time we reached the cliff edge at 0945, GR 424 071, the view was stupendous, as the complex cliff lines of the Devils Throat annex created a composite image of sequential pagodas and amazing rock sculpture. The topographic map is annotated with advice that the cliffs here are 51m high. We stopped and just savoured the view. About 30m further to the south, there is another viewing platform, where more than a kilometre of East Creek imagery is a wonder.

Next, how to descend? Hidden away between the soaring pagodas, there is a way down. It does have a few small slide and jump sections but is otherwise easy. In less than half an hour, we were crossing East Creek and fighting our way through flood flattened ferns, heading north to where Camp Creek and East Creek join.

The Camp Creek – East Creek junction area is relatively large, and there was plenty of room for the party to spread out and enjoy morning tea. I spent some time gazing up at the cliffs to the immediate north, as they looked





Come on, who's first to cross? Photo: Emanuel Conomos



Inside the Devils Throat. Photo: Brian Fox

scalable. They certainly appeared no more intimidating than the cliffs we descended to reach East Creek. After a leisurely 11 minute break, we started walking up Camp Creek.

Camp Creek in the lower reaches meanders from one side of the valley floor to the other, making multiple crossings necessary. The Devils Throat feature is nearly 500m from the junction in a direct line and considerably more in actual distance, because you negotiate the multiple creek bends as it wends its way. A taste of the good things to come is small complex of waterfalls at GR 429 071, where we spent quite a few

minutes clambering up adjoining boulders to get the very best pictures. Getting around this feature involved a choice of either a sloping tunnel crawl or a tight chimney squeeze. We shed our packs here so that we had greater ease of movement. Most of the party opted for the tunnel crawl. The tunnel came in for some ribald anatomical names, none of which can be recorded!

In the final section of the narrowing gorge, immediately before the enlarged amphitheatre terminus, there is a large cavern, tens of metres across, together with several smaller ones. It is an area of unrivalled magnificence. In the lower



Near the junction of East Creek and Camp Creek. Photo: Yuri Bolotin





Michael Keats on the way back out and down the creek. Photo: Brian Fox



Grace Armstrong emerging from Camp Creek's side passage. Photo: Brian Fox



You can sense the roar! Photo: Emanuel Conomos



sections of the floor of the large cavern, is a carpet of Hornworts, *Phaeoceros* sp. These amazing organisms are rarely seen in such profusion.

It was just on 1130 as we rounded the last bend when the shimmering, inflated apron of the outflow from the Devils Throat came into view. Everything about this site is special. The foot of the apron has a series of very large negotiable boulders. These provide stepping (hopping) stones across the apron to the western side of the amphitheatre and the negotiable route to the base of the throat. The way up is over slippery rocks, some with flowing water. All around is sculptured sandstone. There are scooped pools that are like baths; shallow basins that in mid summer would invite a swim; there are treacherous sections, where a false move would see you toboggan uncontrollably down the water slide. Then, there is the noise of water crashing down as it discharges from the contorted canyon at the top into the cylindrical tube of the Devils Throat. Coming up closer, one notices this amazing horizontal slit, where the falling water can be seen as a perpetual curtain before it races down the slope and over the apron. The slot is perhaps 4m long and half a metre tall. It is very hard to photograph and capture the totality of the experience.

Stepping carefully around to the eastern side of the first pool below the mouth, it was possible to take pictures looking down the apron like water slide. It was also possible to photograph the

towering cliffs above. Through the camera lens, I spied Brian, who had climbed up to the lip of the former sinkhole to take pictures of the wild water inside. We would all go up with some assistance, so that we could look inside this rock and water wonder. The slope up was so slippery that even good gripping shoes were not enough to hold you in place. Successively, Brian and Yuri assisted most of the party to have the ultimate experience.

With Brian and Yuri supporting me from below, and grasping the rock lip of the former sinkhole with one arm, I fished the camera out of my pocket and took a series of pictures. The top section, where Camp Creek briefly becomes a canyon, is wild with white water swirling and churning, before it plunges 15m or so as an almost solid sheet into the cylindrical well section. This is what we had come to see, a unique natural wonder. I am looking forward to admiring the images captured on the big cameras.

Leaving was hard, because this place has a compelling fascination of its own. But we did have to move along, so after nearly half an hour of total enjoyment, we reluctantly started the walk out. The tunnel crawl was reversed and packs were retrieved. It was now after midday and time to walk to the confluence of East Creek and Carne Creek about 600m downstream. Recent floods have left a lot of debris to be negotiated, and there were plenty of places where a misplaced foot suddenly discovered a deep hole. While walking this section, a



Returning after a very satisfying day out. Photo: Emanuel Conomos



Yuri Bolotin graces a flowing Camp Creek. Photo: Emanuel Conomos



beautiful pale lilac coloured fungus was found and photographed. It is *Hygrocybe lewellinae*.

Lunch was taken on a rare open and relatively clear space at 1257, GR 424 075. Twenty two minutes later, refuelled and ready, we resumed our way downstream. The junction of East Creek and Carne Creek was reached at 1333. Rather than walk in the creek, we headed up to the base of the cliffs, where there was less debris and, most of the time, an animal pad to follow. It was also considerably warmer and drier. A juvenile Red Bellied Black Snake, *Pseudechis porphyriacus* was spotted sunning itself. After about five minutes walking, we were able to pick up the track we created when exploring this area for a slot exit after visiting the Glory Box on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2013.

An exit that does work well is located at GR 419 075. It is a good, quick climb and, once achieved, is less than 100m from the bike track. A Blue Tongue Lizard, *Tiliqua scincoides* was disturbed near the top of the climb. It was now 1418. After a short rehydration stop and some chatter, it was time to cover some distance to the bike track, which was intersected at 1429, GR 419 073. We were now walking in full sun, so a further welcome drink stop was made at the viewing point, GR 420 067. It was now 1456, and a number of the party were feeling just a little fatigued. The vehicles were reached at 1518.

Total distance walked 9.73km, total ascents 454m.

## TABLE OF TIMES, LOCATIONS AND GRID REFERENCES

Time	Location	Grid Ref
0849	Park vehicles	414 058
0914	Viewing point on motor bike track	420 067
0933	Leave motor bike track and head east to cliff edge	422 072
0945	At cliff edge + view towards the Devils Throat	424 071
0950	Second lookout + view up East Creek+ descent	424 071
1016	At East Creek	425 070
1023	Morning tea on Camp Creek, 11 minutes	425 071
1047	In Camp Creek canyon	427 071
1130	Waterfall and tunnel	429 071
1142	At the Devils Throat (about 30 minutes)	430 072
1205	Waterfall and tunnel	429 071
1257	Downstream on East Creek + lunch, 22 minutes	424 075
1333	Junction of Carne Creek and East Creek	422 077
1405	Base of climb out	419 075
1418	Top of climb + break	419 074
1429	Intersect with motor bike track	419 073
1456	View spot and drink break on motor bike track	420 067
1518	At vehicles	414 058



Yuri Bolotin within the access rock tunnel on the way to the Devils Throat. Photo: Brian Fox