

Upper Florentine

Self-drive/walking guide

From the hut you can backtrack or return to Gordon River Road via Cooks Track. Leave Adamsfield Track at the Hut and make your way to the logging road, walking through the remains of coupe FO42F. Follow the logging road and take the first right hand road, heading south (and downhill) to Cooks Track.

Note: this is a full day walk as a 12 kilometre loop, from the carpark to Churchill's Hut and back via Cooks Track.

WALKS FROM GORDON RIVER ROAD

8. Rani's Track (3 hours return)

This walk follows a ridge of oldgrowth Eucalyptus Regnans, the tallest flowering hardwood plant in the world. Visit 'Rani' a giant E. Regnans with a girth of 16.5 metres.

Walk through a fern gully, moss-laden sassafras trees and cross a creek before rejoining Gordon River Road.

9. Thumbs Lookout (17.7 kilometres from Maydena)

Just down the hill from the Humboldt Divide, park on the right hand side of the road and follow the short rock-lined pathway to the Thumbs Lookout.

From here you get an overview of the threatened forests of the Upper Florentine Valley, and the surrounding alpine peaks, including the spectacular Thumbs Range.

10. The Needles (3 hours return)

(Walk sign posted from carpark below Tim Shea).

Get a 360 degree panoramic view of the Upper Florentine and surrounding valleys, as well as the devastation caused by commercial logging in the coupes underlying the horizon. Scramble across rocky outcrops to various pinnacles where the flora grips to the exposed bedrock and holds within it a unique ecosystem.

DISCLAIMER

Visitors to this area should be aware that natural hazards occur within Tasmania's forest environments. The Wilderness Society accepts no liability for any injury or damage resulting from such hazards.

THE UPPER FLORENTINE CAMPAIGN

The Wilderness Society has been working for the protection of the Upper Florentine for many years, and the campaign involves encouraging visitors to come and experience the beauty of these forests for themselves.

The Upper Florentine is threatened by logging and woodchipping. In recent years, logging has destroyed more than a hundred hectares of old growth forest in three separate parts of the Upper Florentine, with more than 85% of the wood carted directly to the woodchip mills.

Roads have encroached on once-pristine areas at great taxpayer expense, and more are planned to open up new areas for clearfelling. Unless this forest is protected, road works will continue to push deeper into the untouched areas of the valley and clearfelling operations will continue.

The tension between environmentalists trying to protect Tasmania's ancient forests and timber workers trying to protect their industry has existed for decades, but with the Tasmanian timber industry in collapse, a way forward is here.

In 2010, a Statement of Principles was agreed to by conservation groups, timber communities, forest unions and the industry with the view to developing a comprehensive Tasmanian Forest Agreement. The agreement represents the best chance in a generation to secure lasting peace in Tassie's forests and the permanent protection of places like the Upper Florentine.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Write to the Prime Minister

Express your support for the protection of our Tassie's growth forests, including the Upper Florentine. Visit www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm

Sign up for updates via Facebook, Twitter and email

Visit www.wilderness.org.au/tasmania for more details.

Join The Wilderness Society

Or make a tax-deductible donation to our Upper Florentine campaign. Freecall 1800 030 641 or visit www.wilderness.org.au/join

Shop at The Wilderness Society Shop

Visit us at Shop 8, Galleria, 33 Salamanca Place, Hobart. All profits from the shop go toward our campaign to protect Tasmania's forests.

THE UPPER FLORENTINE

The Upper Florentine Valley lies 80 kilometres west of Hobart in the rugged and wet western part of the state. It is an intrinsic part of Tasmania's South-West wilderness – one of the greatest temperate wilderness areas on Earth.

The Upper Florentine is surrounded by the spectacular mountains of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The valley floor is home to giant trees, rainforest and moorlands as well as outcropping limestone. This limestone is riddled with caves containing ancient Aboriginal heritage as well as the bones of extinct mega-marsupials.

The area also has a rich European heritage. The Timbs Track joins the Adamsfield Track to take you along a former packhorse trail to the now deserted mining settlement of Adamsfield and the remote homestead of Gordonvale.

The last captive thylacine (now extinct Tasmanian Tiger) which has featured in famous footage and photos, was captured in the Florentine Valley.

The Upper Florentine is home to some of the most 'carbon dense' forests in the world. As trees grow they draw in carbon from the atmosphere. This carbon is locked away in the trees, and in forest debris and soils. Protecting old-growth forests like the Styx from logging is one of the cheapest and quickest ways we can help avert dangerous climate change.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Take care on the roads

The roads through the Upper Florentine get slippery in the wet, and dusty in the dry. Drive no faster than 50 kilometres per hour and slow down for potholes, corrugations and other hazards. Drive slowly in the evening and at dusk to spare wildlife.

Go with adequate supplies

Fill your petrol tank before leaving. Bring food, water, sunhat, raincoat and stout shoes.

Bushfire warning

Please do not light campfires or smoke cigarettes while in the forest. It is not advisable to visit the forest on days of total fire ban or high wind.

GETTING THERE

From Hobart, travel through New Norfolk and on to Maydena via Bushy Park, Westerway and past Mt Field National Park. When you reach Maydena (90 kilometres from Hobart, and the last petrol stop) set your odometer to zero.

Continue through Maydena on the Gordon River Road. You will soon pass a sign indicating the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Crossing the Humboldt Divide you will be greeted by a vista of bare, jagged mountains looming above a valley of primeval forests. These are the threatened forests of the Upper Florentine.

WALKS FROM TIMBS TRACK CARPARK

(21 kilometres from Maydena)

Keep driving along Gordon River Road until you re-enter forest. On the right, 3.3 kilometres from the Thumbs Lookout, is a signposted car park and the start of Timbs Track.

The track, although very clear and well maintained, does have some muddy patches and there is no reliable water supply unless you are planning on walking as far as the Florentine River (approx. 1.5 hours plus).

Timbs Track provides access to visitor points 4 to 7 described in the column to the right:

1. Timbs Track

From the car park, walk along Timbs Track and enter the mixed wet forests of the Upper Florentine Valley. Follow Timbs Track through a primeval forest of giant stringybarks with a rainforest understorey of ancient myrtles and sassafras.

Timbs Track continues to the Tiger Valley Lookout and on to the Florentine River. As you walk along the track you will experience changing geology and ecology as you move from mixed wet forests and rainforest up onto a low quartzite ridge and into buttongrass and heathland.

In spring and summer the wildflowers here are spectacular.

Along the way you will pass the following two side-trip options:

2. Twisted Sister (15 mins return from Timbs Track)

After about five minutes walk along Timbs Track, you will see pink tape and a sign on your left. This indicates a track (approx ten minutes or 250 metres) that runs through the forest and makes a loop around the base of a giant tree called Twisted Sister.

The reason for the name will become obvious when you find the tree!

3. Lungs of the Land Track (25 min return from Timbs Track)

This track joins the Timbs track with the logging road via a meandering 25 minute walk.

It was named after a banner on the tree that hosted the original protest tree sit and a message about the relationship between forests and climate change that our political decision makers need to understand.

4. Coupe Loop (50 minutes return from carpark)

A further ten minutes along Timbs Track, you will see another track marked with pink tape. This is a loop track which curls back onto Timbs Track after making its way through forest typical of the area – full of towering eucalypts, giant myrtles and fantastic tree ferns.

5. Tiger Valley Lookout (1 hour from carpark)

The Tiger Valley Lookout was built by volunteers concerned about the proposed logging of the Upper Florentine. The wood was milled from a eucalypt log left as waste from forestry operations in the Florentine.

From the Tiger Valley Lookout you can see the surrounding peaks, including the Thumbs, Mount Wright, Tiger Range, Mount Field West, Tim Shea, the Needles, Mount Mueller and the Sawback Range. Take a moment here to soak in the amazing view!

6. Florentine River (40 mins from the lookout)

From the lookout, you can walk on to the Florentine River. At the river there are a couple of decaying huts, and a clear mossy area (perfect for a picnic).

7. Churchill's Hut (6 hours return or loop from carpark)

(Take Timbs Track and then follow Adamsfield Track).

Visit the historic 'Churchhills Hut', the site where the last living Tasmanian Tiger, (Thylacine) was held after capture.

The last living Thylacines were caught in this area. Thylacines were systematically hunted down, ostensibly to protect livestock, then for bounties and, finally once numbers were at a critical low, trapped live for zoos in Australia and overseas, resulting in the extinction of the species.

