



# The Styx Valley of the Giants

A Wilderness Society guide to the Styx Valley's big tree walks

Image: Rob Blakers

  
**Wilderness  
Society**  
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Home to some of the tallest trees in the world, the Styx Valley is known for its lush rainforests, wild rivers and controversial past.

For decades people of all ages and walks of life fought to protect the Styx from logging and have it added to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA).

In 2013, we were successful, and together with the Weld and Upper Florentine valleys, Southern Forests and spectacular Great Western Tiers, much of the Styx valley was added to the World Heritage Area.

## The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area

Covering 1.5 million hectares the TWWHA stretches from the state's wild south coast to Cradle Mountain in the north and from the towering forest giants of the Styx to beyond the Franklin and Gordon rivers to the west.

It is recognised for its outstanding natural and Aboriginal cultural heritage values and is one of only two places on earth which meet 7 of the possible 10 World Heritage criteria (the other is Mt Taishan, China), and the only one in the world to meet all four natural criteria. That makes it truly unique.

## Getting there

The Styx is less than two hours' drive from Hobart. The Styx road is unsealed but is accessible by car. You will find all you need on the way, including food, coffee, fuel and accommodation.

However, please be warned: The Styx Valley is remote and has no services or mobile phone coverage. After rain the road may be slippery and after snow or wind it may be closed by fallen trees. At all times drive slowly.

### Ensure you have:

- enough fuel
- a spare tyre and jack
- plenty of food and water
- good shoes, sun hat and raincoat

Drive from Hobart to Maydena on the Gordon River Rd. 2.5km past Maydena, turn right onto the unsealed Florentine Rd. Turn right again and drive under the overpass. Stay on the Styx Road, avoiding side roads. Initially, you will drive through areas still being logged but after about 3km you cross into the protected forests of the TWWHA.

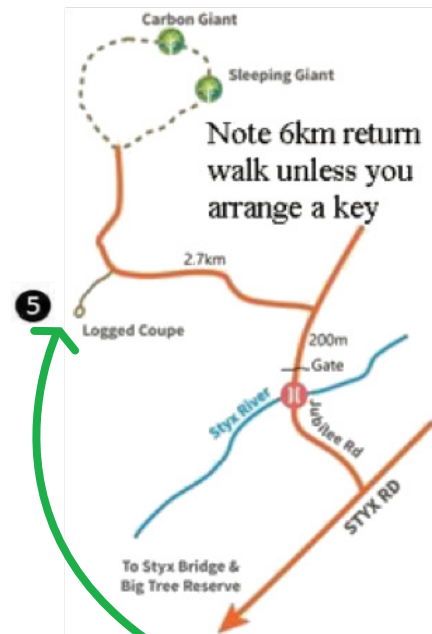


*Eucalyptus regnans* in the Styx Valley | Image: Geoff Law





The Styx River was first named by the early European colonisers as the 'Sticks River', because of the huge number of fallen tree trunks covering the river. When looking downstream or from a hillside, the water was hard to see and it looked like a river of sticks to them. During 1826-28 the Government regularised many place names and an unnamed official changed the name to a more classical one to fit in with other place names, e.g. the Walls of Jerusalem.





## 1. The Styx River Bridge

Stop here to see the beautiful junction of the Styx and South Styx rivers. The river has a mysterious feel, its waters are overhung by rainforest, and stained a tea colour by buttongrass further upstream.

## 2. Big Tree Reserve

Less than 1km after the bridge there are toilets and parking spaces. The Big Tree reserve was first protected as a tiny reserve in the 1950s. It has a well-developed boardwalk and viewing platforms. Follow the tracks among the towering giants, sit in silence and consider that this forest is World Heritage meaning it's the best of the best, public and belongs to you and everyone else in the world!

Length: 700m. Time 30 mins.

## 3. Styx River Ramble

This fully formed track winds down to the Styx River where it turns to the left and continues upriver through ancient myrtle forest, with sitting areas overlooking the river. Once part of the prehistoric Gondwana supercontinent, Tasmania's rainforests are ancient and vitally important links to other parts of the world and back to this period. The arrival of humans over 40,000 years ago brought Tasmania's first peoples, the Palawa, the most southerly people to have survived the last ice age.

Length: 700m. Time 30 mins or more.

## 4. Tolkien Track

Named after the forests of the Lord of the Rings saga, and once scheduled for logging, this patch of forest has seen protests, politicians, campaigns, and now conservation. Protestors camped in this forest for two years to stop it being logged. Wend your way through the giants, under tree ferns and over tree roots and imagine yourself in Middle Earth. Stand inside the Cave Tree and contemplate the age of the forest. Visit Gandalf's Staff, a giant *Eucalyptus regnans*, in which the Wilderness Society and Greenpeace established the Global Rescue Station, a tree sit platform from which activist's beamed pictures and information about these beautiful forests and the proposed logging around the world.

*This track is steep and slippery in places.*

Directions: 600m on from the Big Tree Reserve turn right, up Waterfall Creek Road. Note: This road is steep and not as well made as the Styx Rd. Drive up the hill ignoring two side roads to the left. After 2km park in a cleared area on the right of the road and follow the sign post to the track.

Length: A return trip from the carpark to Gandalf's Staff takes an hour to appreciate. There are side trips for the more adventurous, but please pay careful attention to your route. Pay attention to where you have come from.

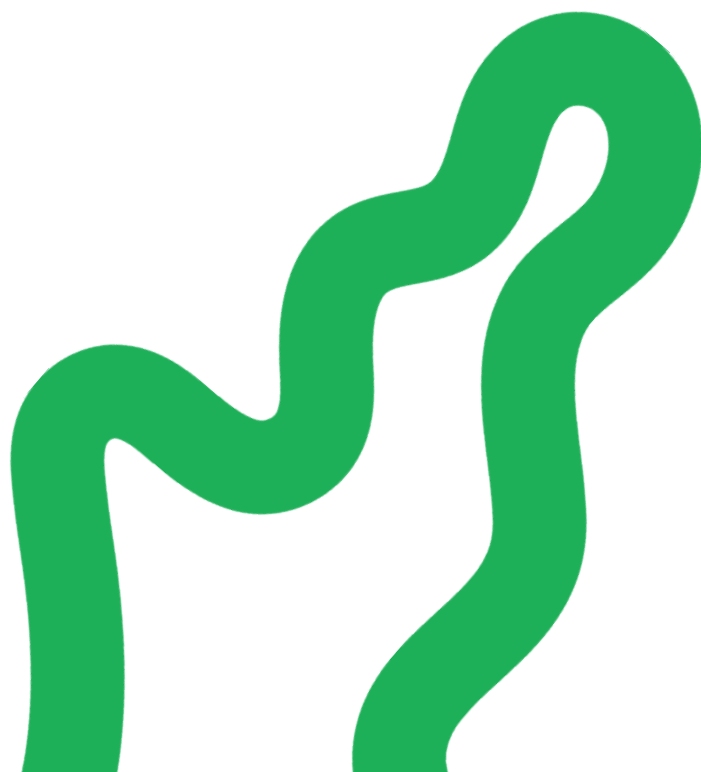
## 5. Carbon Circuit

The tall, wet, eucalypt forests of the Styx Valley are some of the most carbon-dense forests in the world. As part of our citizen science carbon accounting program, the Wilderness Society studied this beautiful forest that was once a proposed logging coupe. Note: To reach it there is a pleasant 6km return walk from the locked gate on Jubilee Rd, unless the gate happens to be unlocked. Alternatively, the key can be borrowed from the visitor's centre at Mt Field National Park by prior arrangement.

The forest is rich with flora and fauna. Take the 30-minute moderate circuit walk to see massive trees rising high from the lush forest floor, fungi and ferns. Relax for lunch or a short break in the meditation circle whilst expanding your lungs in the fresh forest air.

## Other tracks and information

Older leaflets may refer to other tracks but some of these are now overgrown and inaccessible to all but hardy walkers. The forest is slowly reclaiming some of the old logging roads and tracks.



# The Styx Campaign

For over 20 years, the Wilderness Society campaigned for the Styx to be protected and encouraged many thousands of people to visit and experience its beauty and majesty for themselves.

In December 1999, the Wilderness Society decorated a 77m *Eucalyptus regnans* with 3,000 fairy lights and an enormous star to make it the tallest Christmas tree in the world.

In November 2003, the Global Rescue Station was launched. This tree sit platform was suspended 65m above ground in the canopy of a great tree called Gandalf's Staff, which at the time was due to be logged.

For five months people from around the world came to live in the tree which became a focus of national and international media attention. Gandalf's Staff is still standing strong. It is on the Tolkien Track and you can see it for yourself.

In 2004, 4,000 people came to this remote place for a rally. Many thousands more rallied in Hobart, Melbourne and Adelaide. People attended meetings, wrote letters and lobbied politicians.

In 2005, there was some success and most of the forest on the northern side of the Styx River was protected, along with small expansions to the Big Tree and Tall Tree reserves.

## Saved!

In June 2013, much of the forest of the Styx, Upper Florentine and Weld Valleys and other world-class forests of Tasmania were declared World Heritage and the logging stopped. This wonderful outcome was the result of decades of hard work and of two years of hard but successful negotiations between conservationists, unions and the forest industry. It was a win-win outcome for all concerned.

This agreement between conservationists, unions and the industry also enabled other forests of high conservation value (HCV) to be protected from logging, but not mining—places such as the Tarkine, The Blue Tiers and Bruny Island.

## Threatened again

However, the Hodgman Government cancelled the agreement, and now all forests that are not National Parks or World Heritage can potentially be logged. This includes previously protected Conservation Areas.





# How you can help

From the takayna/Tarkine in NW Tasmania through to the NE and SE, 356,000 hectares of forests that were protected under the forest agreement are once again under threat.

1. Visit and enjoy these forests yourselves and tell your friends
2. Please write to the Tasmanian local papers
  - say how much you enjoyed being in unspoiled forests
  - ask that they be protected into the future
  - your message can be short but it is very powerful
3. Tasmanian residents are asked to contact their Legislative Council members and to tell them that reopening these forests for logging is a bad idea and that they should be kept for tourism. Also contact your Lower House Labour representative and encourage them to stand firm against the proposal.
4. At a Federal level write to the Minister for the Environment, Sussan Ley. She has an obligation to protect endangered species whose habitat would be damaged or destroyed as a result of logging. In particular she needs to ensure the enactment of the Giant Lobster Management Plan. She also needs to move quickly to protect remaining habitat for the swift parrot. Other endangered species affected include the masked owl, Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle and Tasmanian devil.
5. Visitors to Tasmania can greatly help by telling Tasmanians how special these forests are, and of their value for tourism.

## Useful addresses

For letters, remember to give your name and phone number:

[mercuryledletter@dbl.newsltd.com.au](mailto:mercuryledletter@dbl.newsltd.com.au) (southern Tasmania)

[editor@examiner.com.au](mailto:editor@examiner.com.au) (northern Tasmania)

[letters@theadvocate.com.au](mailto:letters@theadvocate.com.au) (north western Tasmania)

## The Wilderness Society, August 2020

[wilderness.org.au](http://wilderness.org.au)

[facebook.com/WildernessSocietyTasmania](https://facebook.com/WildernessSocietyTasmania)

*DISCLAIMER: Visitors should be aware that natural hazards occur in Tasmanian forests. The Wilderness Society accepts no liability for any injuries or damage resulting from such hazards.*

