

WORDS AND PHOTOS\_MONICA MCINNES

# Taming the rocky lion

Historically significant to the local Wiradjuri, The Rock Nature Reserve is a treasure trove of walking trails.

**Jutting above the** flat farming landscape, is a crouching lion – head looking up and its body well defined. Sitting at just over 360m above sea level, The Rock Nature Reserve, isn't really so menacing. It offers much for day-trip bushwalkers, including a 6km return hike along the Yerong walking track. The track takes you to the summit of The Rock, and the sweat spent getting there is worth the magical view.

We arrived to a busy carpark and pleasant picnic area marking the start of the track. Despite the sign stating a 'hard' classification, I would actually rate the hike as an easy to moderate depending on your fitness level. Setting off we enjoyed the relatively flat and rocky track lined with bluebells and wattle. The vivid sprigs of gold certainly brightened what was shaping up to be a gloomy day, but soon the track steepened and the rocky path kept us cautious of our footing.

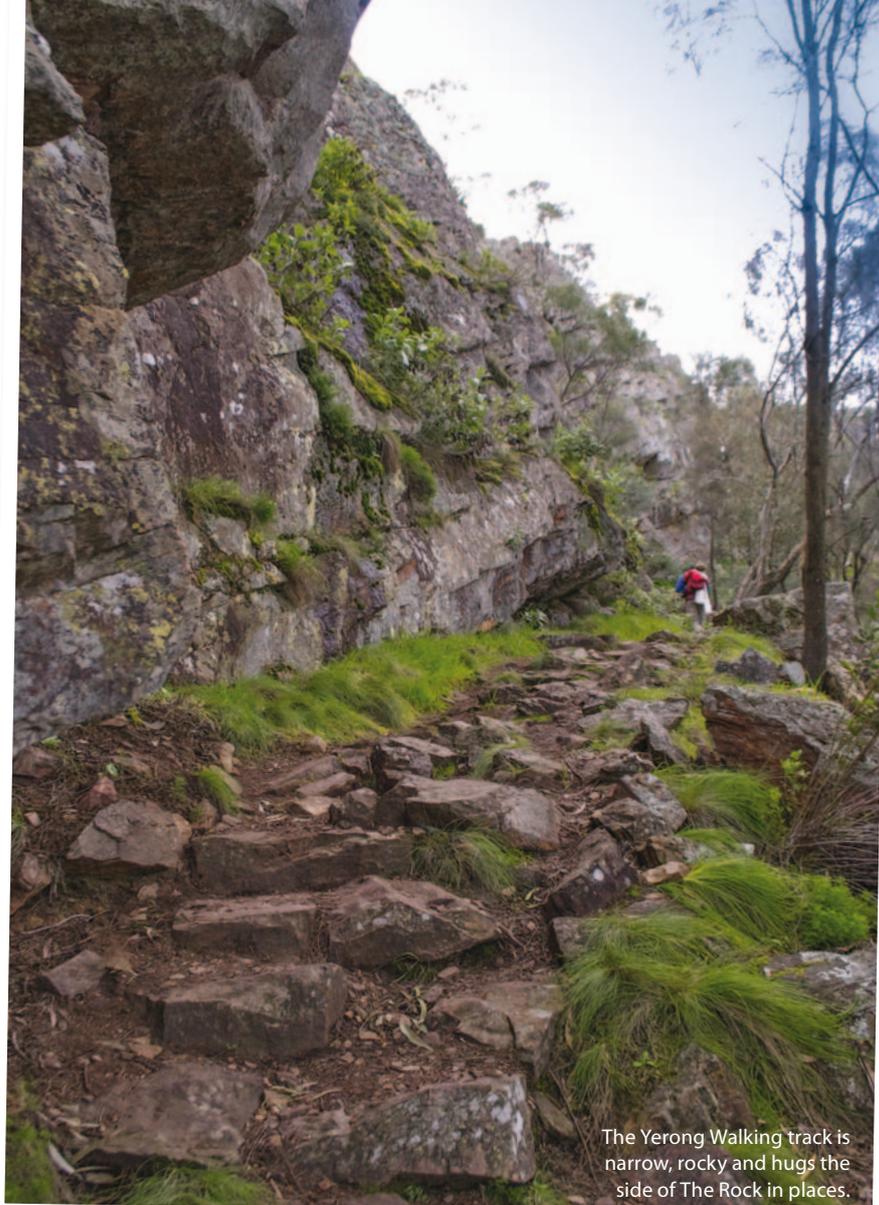
We soon passed the first of many bushwalkers. A couple nearing retirement age armed with hiking poles, fairly frolicking down the track. As we passed, these regular track walkers bid us farewell urging us to "enjoy the walk and the view at the top."

As we zig-zagged up the steep and narrow rocky incline, the mountain track hugged the side of the Rock closely. We paused for short breaks to catch our breath, removed clothing, sipped some water and enjoyed what was shaping up to be an impressive view. The birds sang overhead, unruffled by the many bushwalkers on the trail.

After the recommended 90 minutes, we arrived at the summit and were rewarded with a magnificent 360° view across patchwork farmlands. Just in time to take a couple of photographs from the rocky outcrop before clouds blanketed our view.

On a clear day you can see the Australian Alps to the east and Galore Hill to the west. However watching the cloud enveloping us was also an enchanting experience, and we were mesmerised by the kaleidoscope before us. The march down was quicker – only 60 minutes, "it's a whole different set of muscles you need to use on the way down" some walkers advised as they caught up with us.

After our hike we drove back to our tamed lion's namesake, the township of The Rock, to enjoy a coffee and a locally made Rock cake at Syvler's Cafe. Reflecting there, we agreed that our crouching rocky lion has the best view in the Riverina.



The Yerong Walking track is narrow, rocky and hugs the side of The Rock in places.

## NEED TO KNOW

The Rock Nature Reserve is 35km south of Wagga Wagga and 272km southwest of Canberra. More info: [www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au)

### Walk notes

### YERONG WALKING TRACK

Time/distance: 3hr/6km | Grade: moderate

