

eGUIDE

OVERLAND TRACK PLANNER 2024

With over 8 years of hosting numerous guests, eGuide has compiled invaluable insights to enhance your journey. Our notes aim to address your queries and simplify your planning process, drawing from a wealth of firsthand experiences.

Should you have any questions or require further guidance, don't hesitate to reach out to us at david@eguide.com.au. We're committed to assisting you at every step, ensuring your adventure is seamless and unforgettable.

The Overland Track is a renowned wilderness trek nestled in Tasmania, Australia, winding through the heart of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Stretching across 82.5 kilometres, or shortened to 65 kilometres if opting for the ferry across Lake St Clair, this trail offers a diverse and captivating landscape to explore.

Typically, hikers spend 5 to 6 days completing the Overland Track, though experienced trekkers may conquer it in just 4 days. Throughout the journey, you'll traverse ancient rainforests, vast alpine plateaus, and breathtaking mountain ranges, each offering stunning vistas and opportunities to encounter unique flora and fauna. Prepare to be mesmerized by the beauty of Tasmania's wilderness as you embark on this unforgettable adventure.

PERMITS

If you're planning to trek the Overland Track between October and May, securing an Overland Track Permit is an absolute must. These permits, available through Tasmania National Parks, are in high demand and sell out rapidly. The registration for permits opens in early July, the exact date is not known at this stage. Act swiftly, as slots disappear within minutes for popular dates. Last year, they vanished in a flash! Don't miss out—be ready to log in immediately upon the opening of registration. In addition to your Overland Track Permit, you'll also need a National Parks Pass.

From June to September, while an Overland Track Permit isn't required, registration remains mandatory.

On the day of your Overland Track journey, make sure to register at the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre. Attend the mandatory briefing and collect your permit, which should be prominently displayed on your backpack. You'll also receive a bus ticket for transportation from the Visitor Centre to Ronny Creek, the starting point of your adventure. Don't forget to sign the visitor book before you begin your trek!

THE ROUTE

Day 1: Ronny Creek to Waterfall Valley

A distance of 10.7 kilometres, expected to take 4 to 6 hours. Commence with a gentle climb towards Crater Lake, then tackle a steep ascent to Marions Lookout. Meander through the undulating alpine plains before slowly descending to Waterfall Valley. Accommodation at Waterfall Valley Hut can house up to 34 individuals, with tent platforms available for camping.

Side Trips:

Cradle Mountain: It's conveniently close to Kitchen Hut, where you can leave your pack. The climb to the summit and back takes around 3 hours. During summer, aim to start no later than 2 pm to reach Waterfall Valley by evening. In winter, start much earlier, considering the shorter daylight hours.

Barn Bluff: Barn Bluff offers a rewarding hike of around 4 hours return. It can be tackled on the first or second day, though a backtrack of 1.6km is necessary if done on the second day. Expect a mix of gradual inclines and steep sections, particularly towards the summit.

Day 2: Waterfall Valley to Lake Windermere

Covering 7.8 km over 2.5-3.5 hours, this leg offers a less strenuous route through alpine heathlands, lakes, and tarns mostly on board walk. The new hut at Lake Windermere accommodates 34 people with tent platforms available.

Side Trips:

Lake Will Beach: A quick and easy one-hour walk on day 2, located just under 4km from Waterfall Valley. Take precautions with your pack to deter birds, ensuring zippers are covered and not visible.

Day 3: Lake Windermere to Pelion

Set forth on a lengthy trek spanning 16.8 kilometres, expected to take between 5 to 7 hours. Surrounded by distant peaks, the path navigates diverse landscapes, from button grass plains to myrtle-beech rainforest. Pelion Hut is a large older hut.

Side Trips:

Old Pelion Hut: A 1 km journey taking 0.5 hours return. Explore the historic hut and enjoy a swim in the nearby swimming hole.

Mount Oakleigh (1286m): This longer side trip typically takes about 6 hours return and is often undertaken as a full-day excursion from New Pelion Hut. Enjoy scenic views from the summit.

Day 4: Pelion to Kia Ora

Covering an 8.6-kilometer distance, this segment of the journey spans 3 to 4 hours, weaving its way through lush rainforests and towering mountain peaks. Pelion Gap signifies a vast alpine plateau, offering panoramic views but also necessitating caution during adverse weather conditions. Kia Ora Hut is very new and provides accommodation for 34 individuals.

Side Trips:

Mount Ossa (1617m): Considered the premier Overland Track side trip, Mt Ossa offers the chance to summit Tasmania's highest peak at 1617 meters. The track from Pelion Gap is usually tackled on Day 4 and takes approximately 4 hours return. While mostly straightforward, some scrambling is required in sections.

Mount Pelion East (1433m): A 2.4 km journey taking 2 hours return. Expect steep and exposed terrain.

Day 5: Windy Ridge (Bert Nichols Hut) to Narcissus

Spanning 9.6 kilometres and anticipated to take 3.5 to 4.5 hours, this portion of the journey features diverse forested terrain. Bert Nichols Hut has lodging for 24 guests.

Side Trips:

D'Alton and Fergusson Falls: Located just over 4km from Kia Ora Hut, this relatively easy one-hour return trip to D'Alton and Fergusson Falls offers impressive views, particularly after rainfall.

Hartnett Falls: A 1.5 km journey lasting 1 hour return. Descend through rainforest to reach the falls.

Day 6: Windy Ridge (Bert Nichols Hut) to Narcissus

Gently descend alongside the Narcissus Valley, passing through eucalypt forests and button grass plains. Narcissus Hut offers accommodation for 18 individuals, complete with tent platforms.

Remember to secure your ferry tickets beforehand if concluding your expedition at this point.

Day 7: Narcissus to Cynthia Bay

An optional addition that saves you using the ferry, encompassing a 17.5-kilometer journey lasting 5 to 6 hours, as it winds along the picturesque shoreline of Lake St Clair through lush rainforests. At the 5-kilometer mark, you'll encounter Echo Point Hut, a rustic overnight refuge nestled amidst the natural beauty with a campsite on the beach and an alternative for the 6th night instead of Narcissus Hut.

ADD ON: Pine Valley

The longest of the Overland Track side trips, the Pine Valley Track starts 5km short of Narcissus Hut. It's feasible as a day hike, either from Narcissus Hut or Pine Valley Hut. The highlight—and challenge—for many is the Acropolis, a serious, full-day trek with some demanding scrambling towards the end with a night spent at the Pine Valley Hut.

FERRY

The Lake St Clair Lodge operates the IDA Clair, a passenger ferry that shuttles between Narcissus Hut and Cynthia Bay. The ferry accommodates 22 passengers and completes the 14km trip in approximately 30 minutes, operating year-round.

Opting out of the ferry ride allows you to save the fare and relish a scenic walk along the lake. This is our recommended option.

Booking in advance is necessary for the Lake St Clair ferry. To secure your spot, contact Lake St Clair Lodge at 03 6289 1137. Confirmation of your booking is essential, and you can do so via the radio at Narcissus Hut, where the ferry time will also be confirmed.

During summer, the ferry departs three times daily from Narcissus, typically at 9:30, 13:00, and 15:30, with occasional additions like 11:30. Most groups target the 13:00 departure. Be mindful that this ferry is often heavily booked, particularly by guided Overland Track groups, so early booking is critical.

If you choose not to utilize the Overland Track ferry, the lakeside walk extends for 17.5km. For those making good time, an alternative is to trek to Echo Point Hut on day 5, then to Lake St Clair on day 6. Alternatively, reach Narcissus Hut on day 5, and continue to Cynthia Bay on day 6.

Please note that the Overland Track ferry service may be subject to cancellation due to weather, staffing, or mechanical issues.

Telstra phones have reception at Narcissus, providing a means of communication for coordinating meet-ups. Upon arrival at the Lake St Clair Visitor Centre, conveniently located near the ferry pier, indulge in the café's offerings, including snacks, coffee, and beverages. The visitor centre also features an exhibition room, ranger assistance, restrooms, and even a shower exclusively for walkers.

TRANSPORT FOR THOSE FLYING IN

There are a number of options to consider as part of your planning. If you need help deciding please contact david@eGuide.com.au

Arriving at Launceston Airport is the most popular choice as it offers the widest range of transfer options. Some opt to stay overnight in Launceston and catch an early morning transfer to Cradle Mountain. Others choose the eGuide shuttle to Sheffield, spending the night there for a more relaxed start the next morning, with the opportunity for a leisurely breakfast at the Sheffield Bakery. Alternatively, travellers may decide to journey to Deloraine via Redline bus or eGuide shuttle and spend the night there. Deloraine boasts excellent value hotels and campsites, along with various dining options for dinner and breakfast.

Whilst it is possible to start the trek on the same day you fly in, we have found that late flights and lost baggage can be very disruptive.

Arriving at Devonport Airport is a viable alternative. It's a small airport known for its punctuality, ensuring flights generally run on time. The transfer to Cradle Mountain is shorter, making it feasible to fly in and commence your journey on the same day if time is limited. Otherwise, spending a night in Devonport works well, followed by an eGuide transfer in the morning.

Arriving via the Spirit of Tasmania from Geelong to Devonport offers the advantage of being able to sleep on the boat and then be all set to start your trek the following morning. Typically, the arrival is around 6:30 am, allowing you plenty of time to catch the eGuide shuttle and reach Cradle Mountain with ease.

Arriving at Hobart Airport is not recommended, as it can be challenging and costly to find transportation from Hobart to Cradle Mountain. However, if you do fly into Hobart, you can utilize the Redline bus service to reach Launceston or Deloraine, and from there, arrange a transfer to Cradle Mountain.

Leaving from Launceston Airport remains the top choice for many travellers. With the eGuide shuttle service available, arriving at the airport around 5pm enables catching evening flights—a convenient option for those on tight schedules. While most guests choose to spend the night in Launceston, another possibility is staying in Deloraine. From there, you can take the Redline bus to Launceston the following morning.

Opting for departure from Devonport Airport or via the Spirit of Tasmania provides an alternative route. Departing in the evening, the Spirit allows for same-day departures with the convenience of the eGuide shuttle service. Moreover, you can rest comfortably on the ferry during the journey.

Gas cannot be transported on any flight, but stoves are permitted. All the transfer companies have gas that can be purchased from the drivers.

TRANSPORT FOR THOSE USING A CAR

There are a number of options if using a car. We find the best is to leave your car at Lake St Clair and that then provides full flexibility at the end. Eguide offers all the below options.

Departing from Lake St Clair in the afternoon, transported to either Deloraine or Sheffield for a comfortable overnight stay. Both locations offer various good-value accommodations, ensuring a pleasant rest before continuing the journey the next morning. Departures to Cradle Mountain are early, allowing for an early start to the adventure.

Park in Sheffield while embarking on their Overland Track adventure. Departures are early for an early arrival at Cradle Mountain, with return trips ensuring you are back in town before the evening.

Parking in Devonport, you can depart early for Cradle Mountain, with return trips ensuring a seamless journey back. Devonport offers numerous accommodation, shopping, and dining options for convenience.

Have your car moved with the valet service, available in Devonport or Sheffield. The service transfers you to the start of the Overland Track and relocates their car to Lake St Clair while they trek.

For a direct return trip to Cradle Mountain, you can depart from Lake St Clair in the afternoon.

FOOD

Food preparation is crucial for a successful hike, starting with the choice of cooking equipment. The consensus leans towards simple methanol-fuelled cookers due to their reliability and efficiency. If opting for a Trangia stove, ensure you practice using it beforehand.

Many hikers prefer gas for cooking Overland Track meals. Most couples find two gas canisters sufficient.

For sustenance, vacuum-packed meals and dehydrated meals are popular choices. Strive, based in Hobart, offers excellent dehydrated meals available for online purchase and delivery. Consider carrying an extra meal in case of unforeseen delays.

For quick lunches, pack dry biscuits with cheese in resealable bags for convenience. Some hikers opt for fresh foods on the first day, including avocado, tomatoes, cheese, and ham, but avoid items prone to spoilage or sogginess like lettuce.

To maximize space and reduce weight, remove excess packaging and organize food into portioned zip-lock bags. Keep in mind that hiking burns energy, so plan for larger portions than usual to sustain your trek.

GEAR

Gear selection is crucial for a successful Overland Track adventure. While online advice and packing lists are plentiful, the key is to streamline your pack to around 16 kilograms, with some achieving even lighter loads.

If you need to hire contact ASPIRE in Launceston.

One common oversight we've noticed is the choice of sleeping mat. As temperatures drop, investing in a suitable insulated mat becomes paramount to ward off the cold from below.

Avoid overpacking by carefully considering your clothing needs. Layering is key, allowing you to adjust to changing conditions. Down jackets are particularly praised for their warmth-to-weight ratio and compressibility.

Embrace the inevitability of wet feet, especially during Tasmania's typically damp conditions. However, recent improvements like boardwalks have mitigated much of the mud encountered on the track.

Given Tasmania's short winter days and extended summer daylight, a headlamp is invaluable during the darker months, while long summer evenings render it less critical.

Expect ample downtime for relaxation. While books are a luxury, their weight may deter some. Consider a Kindle for its durability and extensive library. Alternatively, pass the time with card games.

Selecting a well-fitting backpack is paramount for comfort and weight distribution. Gaiters are recommended during summer to protect against snakes, though they're typically non-aggressive.

Be prepared for rain at any time by utilizing dry bags within your pack. Given the absence of mobile service on the track, consider emergency communication options, available for hire at the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre.

For those preferring not to lug their own gear, we offer rental equipment at competitive rates. Reach out to discuss your specific needs.

Here's a comprehensive Overland Track Gear List to assist with your preparations. Most aim for a pack weight of around 16 kilograms, though variations occur:

Pack with comfortable shoulder, hip, and chest straps (minimum 65 litres)

Pack liner or strong plastic bag for rain protection

Tent with cord for tying to tent platforms (compulsory item)

Ground sheet for tent protection and sitting on wet ground

Sleeping bag rated to at least -10°C (or 0°C for summer)

Sleeping bag liner for added insulation and cleanliness

Pillowcase that can be filled with clothes

Sleeping mat for insulation and comfort

Waterproof coat with hood

Waterproof over trousers

Fleece jacket for warmth

Thermal top and bottoms for layering

Two pairs of trousers and shirts

Walking boots, properly broken-in

Two pairs of hiking socks

Two pairs of underwear

Gaiters for snake protection

Sun hat and warm hat

Gloves and waterproof mittens

Camp shoes

Swimwear

Sunglasses and sunscreen

Insect repellent

Toilet trowel and toilet paper

Toiletries (soap, toothbrush)

Fuel stove and matches/lighter

Lightweight cooking pot(s), mug, and bowl

Eating utensils and dish scrubber

Water bottle and collapsible water bag

Water purification tablets (optional)

Overland Track map and compass

Torch/headlamp with spare batteries

Pocket knife and whistle

Day pack for side trips

First aid kit with emergency essentials

Space blanket

Notepad and pencil

Deck of cards

Kindle or book

Camera with spare batteries

Hiking poles (optional)

Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) or emergency communication device

Telstra mobile phone for limited reception areas

Ensure your gear selection aligns with your needs and the expected conditions, prioritizing functionality and weight efficiency to enhance your hiking experience.

HUTS

It's essential to note that you need a sleeping mat for the huts. Cooking fuel is not provided. Some hikers choose to cook their meals in the huts but sleep in their tents for added comfort and privacy.

Waterfall Valley Hut: constructed in 2020.

Windermere Hut: A newly opened hut in 2023, known for its comfort and modern amenities.

New Pelion Hut: This large hut boasts four bunk rooms and can accommodate up to 60 people. It's not uncommon to encounter walkers who are not on the Overland Track, as they arrive from the Arm River Track. The hut's veranda offers stunning views of Mt Oakleigh.

Kia Ora Hut: Another recent addition, constructed in 2023, and praised for its quality and amenities.

Bert Nichols Hut: Built in 2009, this spacious and contemporary hut features three bunk rooms and sleeps up to 24 people. There's plenty of room for dining and socializing.

Narcissus Hut: This hut accommodates 20 people across two sleeping shelves, with a separate dining room. It's from here that you can contact the Lake St Clair Ferry.

Echo Point Hut: Situated halfway along Lake St Clair, this wooden cabin provides accommodation for up to 8 people and includes a coal heater, making it a convenient resting point for those tackling the final 17.5 kilometres of the track.

CAMPING

At each hut along the Overland Track, there's designated camping space, typically featuring wooden platforms for added comfort.

Securing your tent can pose challenges, often relying on hooks or cables for attachment. It's wise to carry extra strong string or robust elastic bands in case cables are missing. Some inventive walkers have even devised their own pegs to anchor tents securely into the slots in the boards—a clever solution.

One requirement for hiking the Overland Track is to carry a tent, serving as a backup in case the huts are full or in emergencies between hut stops. Your choice of tent should align with your accommodation plan. Those opting for hut accommodation should still carry a tent for emergencies, while those planning to camp each night may consider investing in a higher-quality tent.

During the shoulder season, many walkers prefer hut accommodation due to its warmth and relative lack of crowding. However, in peak summer, tents become more popular.

An important consideration for tent campers is the potential for snoring among fellow hikers, which can disrupt sleep.

In wet weather, carrying a wet tent can be burdensome, adding weight and complicating the packing process.

Please be aware that camping is only allowed at designated camping sites close to the huts.

FAUNA

While hiking the Overland Track, keep an eye out for Tasmanian fauna, including wombats, possums, and if you're lucky, a Tasmanian Devil.

There have been reports of sightings of the elusive Tasmanian Tiger, with some suggesting it could still be alive. If you happen to spot one, capturing a photo would be an extraordinary moment.

At Ronny Creek, be on the lookout for wombats living in the button grass, and take your time on the first boardwalk, as it often offers the best viewing opportunities.

Tiger snakes are more likely to be seen when the sun is out, typically basking in sunny spots. If you encounter one, calmly walk backward and give it a wide berth. Tiger snake bites are rare, and not all bites result in venom injection. If bitten, apply a tight bandage to the affected area to impede venom spread and seek medical help promptly.

While snake bites are rare on the Overland Track, communication of an emergency can be challenging. If needed, activate a beacon or seek out someone with one, or reach a ranger for assistance.

Despite their annoyance to some, possums may attempt to access your backpack if left unattended. Keep your belongings secured in the huts at night to deter them.

Beware of ravens and currawongs, as they have learned to unzip backpacks and scatter belongings. Protect your pack by covering it with a groundsheet or cover to prevent unwanted tampering.

Do not feed any animals and best to store your packs in the huts at night if camping.

CRADLE MOUNTAIN ACCOMMODATION

Discovery Parks - Cradle Mountain: Comfortable cabins and powered campsites set amidst natural beauty, ideal for outdoor enthusiasts seeking a peaceful retreat. The most popular as lowest price and very close to the visitor centre.

Cradle Mountain Lodge: A luxurious resort offering cozy cabins and suites surrounded by wilderness, complete with onsite dining and spa facilities. About 2.2km from the visitor centre

Waldheim Cabins: Historic cabins located near Dove Lake, providing rustic charm and close proximity to scenic hiking trails. Booked with National Parks and located at Ronny Creek.

Cradle Mountain Highlanders: Small cabins close to the Visitor Centre

Peppers Cradle Mountain Lodge: Upscale accommodations featuring elegant rooms and private cabins, complemented by gourmet dining options and serene spa facilities.

Cradle Mountain Hotel: A modern hotel providing comfortable rooms, family-friendly amenities, and convenient access to nearby attractions and hiking trails 2km from the Visitor Centre

Cradle Mountain Wilderness Village: Self-contained cabins and chalets nestled in a tranquil forest setting, offering a peaceful retreat amidst nature.

LAKE ST CLAIR ACCOMMODATION

Camping: There is free camping just before the Lake St Clair Lodge managed by Tasmania National Parks.

Lake St Clair Lodge: Lake St Clair Lodge offers a range of accommodation options, including waterfront cabins, self-contained apartments, located where you finish the Overland Track

Derwent Bridge Hotel: A very good choice, currently closed for renovation and expected to open in September.

Pumphouse Point: Located on the southern end of Lake St Clair, Pumphouse Point is a unique accommodation option housed within a restored industrial building. Guests can choose from rooms in the original pumphouse or the newer shoreline pavilions, all featuring modern amenities and panoramic views of the lake. The property also offers a dining room serving locally sourced cuisine and a range of outdoor activities such as hiking, kayaking, and fishing. About 6km from the end of the track, but they will pick you up.

Derwent Bridge Chalets & Studios: Located 6km from Lake St Clair, Derwent Bridge Chalets & Studios offers chalets with fully equipped kitchens or studios with basic amenities. The property also features a communal BBQ area and laundry facilities.