

### Trip Review: Bogong High Plains circuit

by Andrew



A few years ago I caught up with a few guys that I studied Outdoor Recreation. with and we decided to organise a four day walk that would take in some of the most scenic regions of the Victorian High Country. There were a few ideas thrown around as to where to go, but a trip taking in the best of what the Bogong High Plains has to offer seemed like a great idea. The route we planned began near Bogong Village and was to take us over Mt Bogong, over the high plains and return to Bogong Village via Mt Fainter over a four day period.

Unlike the first two days, the third day was relatively flat across the rolling Bogong High Plains. The legs were getting a good rest and the open plains revealed a vast sky. Towards the end of the day we joined up with part of the snow poles which are dotted along the treeless parts of the plains. It was easy to imagine how helpful they would be in a heavy fog. Fog however was not our problem today, but rather the beating sun!

Probably my favourite view of the trip was approaching Mt Jim: after an hour or more of rolling grassy plains, up rises a pimple of rock. Just as you are approaching Mt Jim a slight rise reveals the distant view of Mt Feathertop and the Razorback Ridge.



This was not to be a walk that you could settle in to, as the walking track rises extremely steeply right from the get-go. While all of us had our minds set on making it to Mt Bogong, we were all very impressed with Mt Arthur 1682m, which we had unexpectedly spectacular views across the southern flanks of the Mt Bogong plateau.

A unique feature of the High Plains is the number of huts which you pass and it is always worth downing packs and having a bit of a poke inside. If we hadn't been so pressed for time we could have done a few side trips to visit huts that weren't on our direct route. The hut with the most character that we passed was definitely the Tawonga Hut, which created a great atmosphere for the night's camp.

Our plan was to stay at Cleve Cole hut for our first night, but our second major ascent for the day up Quartz Ridge was really taking it out of our legs. Luckily for us we had good weather over the Bogong plateau and we made it to the hut just before it got dark.

The next day we had one last hurrah across the lesser visited Jaithmathangs, which are effectively the edge of the Bogong High Plains before it drops steeply into the Kiewa Valley. Such a steep drop affords great views directly across to the inspiring peak of Mt Feathertop and was a fitting way to say goodbye to the high country before we descended old fire trails to meet up once again with our cars.



The next day we had a well deserved sleep-in and big breakfast. Once we got going, we only had to walk 2km before we downed packs and spent a couple of hours at Howman Falls. Probably the part we were least looking forward to was the huge descent down T Spur. By the time we made to Big River those of us that did not have trekking poles were well and truly wobbly at the knees. So once again it was time for a rest at the beautiful Big River as we only had a short way to go to get to Ropers Hut which was going to be our camp that night.



# Running Beta: Getting started

by Jonno

Running is an excellent way to stay healthy and requires very little gear. Getting into trail running takes running to the next level and really opens up the activity to far beyond the same old paved roads that you've run over and over. From local trails in parks to ultra marathons through the Australian Alpine region the opportunities are endless. Here are some answers to common questions to get you started:

## 1. How are trail running shoes different to my regular runners?

Trail runners are often a little beefier than your regular road runners, providing more traction for slippery roots and muddy terrain. More stability is achieved by reducing torsional rotation while maintaining anatomically matched flexion. Some trail runners also offer varying degrees of added shock absorption to keep those feet happy for longer runs. As with any gear there is a range of shoes to match how gnarly you want to get with them and some prefer a stripped down, minimalist approach that offers more underfoot feel of the terrain.

## 2. Where to go?

A good starting ground are local single track trails, like the Yarra Trails that run through Westerfolds Park in Doncaster. Once a good level of fitness is acquired a 20km to 40km trail run can be easily managed in a day. A favourite of mine would be a return trip to the summit of Mount Bogong from the Mountain Creek Car Park, which is a little over 20kms, with roughly 1400 metres of ascending, depending on the route you choose.

## 3. What other gear do I need?

For shorter runs you may not need more than a good pair of runners, a pair of shorts and a running t-shirt. Longer more demanding runs and weather conditions may mean you need to acquire a few extra bits and pieces.



**Clothing:** Moisture wicking fabrics like synthetics or merino wool are the way to go. Cotton saturates very quickly and takes a long time to dry. A good pair of socks can really help avoid blisters and keep your feet nice and dry too. If the weather is a little wet/cold, a light weight outer shell will help keep the wind chill down and offer some protection from the rain.

**Hydration:** A hydration pack or vest specifically suited to running is an excellent way of carrying the fluid you need to keep going without it bouncing around and getting on your nerves. It also gives you some space to store your keys, a lightweight outer shell, first aid supplies (compression bandages for sprains and snake bites) and an energy source, such as Clif Bars and bananas.

**Head torch:** If you plan on running in the dark or there is a chance your run could finish after the sun goes down, a head torch is a must. A higher level of brightness is required when you're running to highlight the terrain that lies ahead to avoid injury. A sturdy base against your forehead reduces the amount the unit bounces around as well.

# Gear: Overnight pack fitting

by Nick



Anyone who has some experience with overnight bushwalking under their belt will come to the conclusion that, by a long stretch, the two most important pieces of equipment to get right are your bushwalking boots and your overnight pack.

Most people new to bushwalking understand the importance of choosing the right fitting boot... get it wrong and you'll get blisters, lost toe nails and other woes! Less understood is what

constitutes a well fitted pack; one which you can wear for hours at a time, day after day without that aching feeling in your shoulders or painful rubbing on your hips.

When fitting a customer for a pack I always find it important to first to establish what size pack they need. The size you will need is determined by two main factors. 1) Is your equipment large or small? 2) Do you intend to use the pack on longer hikes where you will have to take a lot more food? Or, will you be limiting yourself to hikes no longer than two or three nights? Most modern packs have expandable throats which allow you to extend the packs capacity by 10 to 20 litres. For most people a 65L pack will be sufficient, but packs of up to 85L are available.

Once you have determined what size pack you require, then the hard work begins. You wouldn't buy pair of boots without first trying a lot of pairs on and the same goes for overnight packs. We all have different body shapes and some models will suit some people and not others. While you are trying on the packs, staff at The Wilderness Shop will customise the back length of the pack to suit your height and explain what the myriad of straps do. One thing I commonly see is people over-tightening straps and this can take the load off the hip belt and place it painfully on the shoulders.

The most important consideration is how the hip belt feels. This is because, in a good fitting pack, approximately 70 to 80% of the load should be transferred away from your shoulders and on to your hips where you will be able to carry the weight much more comfortably. Make sure you try a few packs with weight in them, but only just enough so that you can determine which pack is the most comfortable. If you put too much weight in, then they will all be uncomfortable and it won't help your decision making.

# Technique: beginners guide to top roping

by Nick

As indoor rockclimbing becomes increasingly popular, many gym climbers are finding themselves drawn to test their skills outdoors on 'real' rock. The problem for many gym climbers however is that they are unsure of what specialised equipment they require and how best to safely set it up.



The first thing to recognise is that there are three different types of climbing outdoors, each which requires different equipment setups. 1) *Top Roping*: in principle is similar to its indoor equivalent. 2) *Sport Climbing*: similar to indoor lead climbing. 3) *Trad Climbing*: requires the lead climber to hand place equipment to protect a fall. Most climbers transitioning from the gym will start with top roping.

The major difference between a top rope set up in the gym and on natural rock is that you will need to create your own anchor to safely secure the climbing rope. How you make your anchor will depend on the conditions directly above the route you intend to climb. It is an obvious but relevant point, but if you can't safely walk to the top of the route then it is not possible to set up a top rope anchor.



An anchor in its simplest form may have steel bolts at the top which you can clip into with screw-gate carabiners. A length of quality 11mm static rope then traverses the distance between the bolts and the edge of the cliff. The static rope is tied-off and two (preferably steel) carabiners are placed in an opposite and opposed manner which the climbing rope is then threaded through and the climber ties on to.

Most venues will not have steel anchor bolts at the top, thus requiring you to create your own secure anchoring. An anchor is generally created in one of two ways: 1) looping a sling of appropriate length around a solid rock formation or tree (note: not all areas allow tree anchors. A tree protector such as a jumper or blanket should also be used). The sling is then connected to the 11mm static rope as in the previous example. 2) placing a 'nut' or 'hex' (basically a curved and tapered piece of aluminium alloy available in various sizes) into a constricting

crack. The principle of such placements is that any force applied to the piece of protection will only serve to wedge it more tightly into the crack. As the anchor is critical, it is important to note that multiple placements should always be used.

**Top Rope Checklist:** 20m length of 11mm static rope, 1 x 240cm sling, 1 x 120cm sling, 5 x alloy D shape locking carabiners, 2 x large steel carabiners, set 1-10 of nuts and set of hexes. The cost of such a set up is around \$600 and will vary depending on which equipment is chosen. Staff at The Wilderness Shop have decades of climbing experience and are here to help you navigate the often confusing and intimidating process of choosing climbing equipment. Note: this list is addition to the standard climbing equipment which many gym climbers will already own: shoes, harness, 60m climbing rope, one belay device per person, chalkbag and a helmet.



In addition to owning all the equipment necessary to set up a top rope it is imperative that at least one person has the appropriate level of training to set everything up safely. Climbing guides can be hired on a daily basis either one-on-one or for a group of friends. Come in and speak to us if you would like some recommendations for climbing guides. If you let them know you would like to concentrate on top rope set-up they can train you on appropriate knots, equalising the anchor, nut placement and other important safety considerations. There are several guides who operate out of Arapiles and The Grampians as well as guides who take groups to climbing destinations closer Melbourne. Another good idea is to purchase a book such as 'Mountaineering: the freedom of the hills' \$59.95 which covers most of the basics you need to know about top-roping.

*NB: This is general advice only. This article in itself is not intended to give you the knowledge required to set up top ropes. It is your responsibility to seek training in the techniques required.*

# Climbing Gear: Y&Y belay glasses

by Mac



Unless you are a climbing God and have never belayed in your life, you will more than likely be familiar with neck pain associated with repetitive and prolonged periods of neck extension while belaying.

According to Y&Y, "Belay glasses negate the need to place the head in an extended posture, minimising the likelihood of these complaints. The lack of these issues mean a belayer can keep their eyes on the 'job' rather than having to look away to ease any neck fatigue therefore maximizing safety of the climber and belayer which we all know is the major priority."

The Y&Y belay glasses have minimalistic frames resulting in maximum peripheral vision so you can still see down to your belay gear, see your surroundings and be able to look above at the climber when needed. Solid plastic frame \$89.95 aluminium frame: \$129.95