



WILDSIDE

Trip Review: Lerderderg Gorge

By James



Lerderderg River

Itching to get out of the city, a few university friends and I decided to head off and explore the more forgotten sections of Lerderderg State Park over the weekend. Located an hour west of Melbourne, Lerderderg Gorge is a great place to visit for both day walks and overnight hikes. This overnight trip would involve steep walking tracks, multiple river crossings, and a fair amount of off-trail exploration.

We rendezvoused early on the Saturday morning at Mt. Blackwood, on the western side of the park. Eager to get going, we divided the food and hit the trails. The first few kilometres of track were nice undulating terrain through very stereotypical Australian bushland, however the track became very steep as we turned to descend into the gorge. During the descent, we quickly learned whose boots had enough tread left on them, as the steep trail combined with overnight packs became rather treacherous towards the end.

Upon reaching the Lerderderg River, we stopped for a quick break to assess any damage that had occurred in the mad scramble down into the gorge. Thankfully the only damage was some minor grazes and uncomfortably squished toes. As we made our way downstream, we realised that while the recent rains had refreshed the environment, making it beautiful and green, the added undergrowth and flowing river provided many obstacles to slow our progress. As the day grew older and the sun rose over our heads, the gorge became increasingly hot as the shade from the gorge walls receded. To escape the worst of the heat, we found a nicely shaded pool in the bend of the river and laid down for rest and some lunch.



Escaping the heat

As we planned to camp alongside the river, and without knowing where a suitable location would be, once the sun had stopped beating down upon us we quickly packed up and continued downstream. As we got deeper into the gorge, and further away from any marked trails, the river became increasingly impassable without scrambling around the walls of the gorge, or wading significant distances. We opted for the scrambling option as we preferred dry feet. This option also gave us a chance to get some basic rock climbing in, and an

excuse to get up close and personal with some of the amazing rock formations in the gorge.

The sun started to dip lower in the sky and we had still not found a site suitable for setting up two tents. We eventually came across a location that could squeeze two tents in, however not comfortably and on rather damp ground. At this point we had to make the decision to stay and have a cramped, wet night at this location or take the risk and hope we find better location further downstream. No strangers to walking in the dark, we opted for the latter and proceeded further into the gorge. Roughly an hour later, just before the light began to fade, we stumbled upon a small clearing next to pool of water. We decided we could just squeeze two tents in and quickly set up camp before dark.

After an excellent night filled with soothing sounds of the river and wildlife, we arose early and prepared ourselves for the most physically exerting day of the hike, getting out of the gorge. After another 15 minutes of walking downriver, we stumbled upon a beautiful open, grassy camping location with excellent views and fresh flowing water alongside! Bummer! Laughing at how close we came to the proper campsite we continued and quickly reached the end of our 'off-track'



Lerderderg Weir

expedition marked by the appearance of the Lerderderg Weir. We readied ourselves for the long, slow climb out of the gorge along the aptly named Long Point Track. While this track was physically straining, it did provide us with an amazing view over the Lerderderg River and the gorge. As we reached the top of the track and turned onto Blackwood Ranges Track, we met an official who was setting up an 200+ kilometre ultra-marathon through the park over 48 hours. And we thought our weekend hike was tough enough!

A quick, scenic loop around the bottom of the Ah Kow Gully Reference Area led us back to the cars at Mt. Blackwood. Heading off-trail on this hike was certainly rewarding.

Not only does it give you a sense of adventure, venturing out in the wilderness without a defined path to follow, but it also allows you to see and experience things that very few people have before you. The amazing scenery and wildlife that we spotted was more than enough compensation for the bruises and scratches gained while walking off the beaten track. This trip down into Lerderderg was an amazing adventure, and a great stepping stone for those wanting to get into more serious off-trail expeditions.

Map of Lerderderg & Werribee Gorges is available from The Wilderness Shop. \$9.95

Mont Tents Gear Review

by Mac

Mont has recently updated their tent range introducing the Stargazer, Eddie and a new version of the Epoch.

The Stargazer is a two person 3 to 4 season tent at a great price point of \$569.95. Even though this tent has a lower cost it still features quality components such as DAC Pressfit poles and a 70 Denier 10,000mm waterhead PU laminated Nylon floor. The interior dimensions of this tent are generous at 132cm x 220cm making it a very roomy two person tent, perfect for when the weather is foul and you become tent bound. This extra room more than makes up for the slightly higher weight of 2.8kg packed or 2.59kg minimum. The symmetrical design and simple pole configuration make this tent quick and easy to erect. With two vestibules and vented doors it is comfortable all year round. The Stargazer is perfect as a first bushwalking tent or for those looking for a bit of extra room.



Mont Stargazer 2 person tent

The new version of the Epoch is more streamlined than the original and Mont have added the ability to 'double pole' the tent to increase the strength in extreme weather situations. This brings the Epoch into the realm of a true two person expedition tent. The five pole design makes this tent extremely stable in high winds and the two vestibules give ample storage space for all your winter gear. Three roof vents complete the ensemble to allow good ventilation in poor conditions. The floor is a 10,000mm 70 Denier PU laminated Nylon which is both durable and waterproof. The highest quality DAC Featherlite NSL poles are used to keep the tent light and strong with a total packed weight of 3.8kg and minimum weight of 3.48kg. The Epoch is \$949.95 plus \$189.95 for an additional pole set making it a great value for money expedition tent.



Mont Epoch 2 person tent

The Eddie is an extra tough tent available in a two or three person version designed with outdoor education in mind. The simple design is easy to pitch and the materials used are extremely tough. The larger diameter 9.5mm DAC Pressfit poles reduce the risk of breakage from inexperienced users. The tent boasts durable #8 YKK zippers and the floor is 100 Denier PU coated Nylon with a 5000mm waterhead, making it one of the toughest on the market. The two person tent weighs 2.9kg packed or minimum of 2.67kg with internal dimensions of 132cm x 220cm. The three person tent is 3.48kg packed or 3.2kg minimum with internal dimensions of 195cm x 225cm. The Eddie is \$529.95 for the two person or \$629.95 for the three person model.



Mont Eddie 3 person tent

Being prepared for Winter

Now that the colder months have arrived it is vital that we start thinking about the type of outdoor clothing needed for our adventures in the wild.

The clothing we wear and carry in our packs is of great importance as it is designed to protect us from the winter chill and the elements. Conditions can change rapidly in the outdoors, so here is some information on what to carry.

- It is important to have great base layer protection as this provides the first layer of warmth. The types of thermal wear that help keep you cosy are Merino wool thermals and synthetic base layers such as polypropylene and Mont Silk Weight Power Dry. Mont Silk Weight Power Dry is a high performance thermal that uses Polartec Power Dry technology to keep you warm and dry. This thermal offers superior wicking, keeps your skin dry when you sweat, dries quickly and is highly breathable. Polartec Power Dry fabrics feature a patented 'bi-component' knit construction that moves a least 30% more moisture away from the skin than single-component fabrics.

- Next it is important to think about the mid layer to add the extra protection you need to withstand the elements. The types of mid layer protection could be a fleece and soft shell jacket or hoody. You can even add a down jacket into the system as well for those colder conditions. The Gamma MX Hoody from Arc'teryx is the perfect hoody to work as a mid layer. It has a moisture resistant face fabric and is lightly insulated. The jacket is wind resistant and has a DWR Finish (Durable water repellent which

by Andrew

repels water from the fabric surface).

- Outer layers or shell garments are extremely important as they provide protection against wind and rain. The outer layers should be waterproof and breathable. They come in a variety of weights and features. What you need depends on whether you are day tripping or doing long winter trips. Either way waterproof jackets and pants are a must for your wilderness adventures. Most importantly stay safe, warm and dry this winter.



Mont Silk Weight Polartec Power Dry

Arc'teryx Gamma MX Mens Hoody



Waxing Skis for Winter

It is that time of year again to get your skis ready for the fast approaching ski season. To achieve a fast slide and glide out in the backcountry or on the slopes it is necessary to wax your skis. A ski should be waxed regularly throughout the winter season to

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help increase the life and performance of your backcountry, cross country or down hill ski.

First step will be to take your skis out and check the base to see if they are dry or looking well used. The Hot wax is generally the most effective method of maintaining the bases of skis. The Hot wax should ideally be done by a waxing technician. To Hot wax your skis you will need a few things such as a block of Swix wax, a waxing iron and a scraper. It is also necessary to have a waxing station set up to clamp the ski in place. Once all the correct equipment has been set up it is time to wax. Turn on the waxing iron to melt the wax onto the ski base. Make sure the iron is not too hot as it can burn the base of the ski. Touch the block of wax to the iron and drip wax onto the ski base. Do not put wax on the pattern base. Once the wax is dripped on you can then iron the wax onto the ski base. When completed leave the wax to dry for a few minutes, then scrape the base of the ski. Start by scraping the wax from the edges first, then move to scraping the wax from the base. Always scrape from tip to tail, removing all the excess dry wax. Glide wax can also be used on the bases of skis to increase glide. Glide wax can be carried with you when skiing as it can act as a fast fix if your skis are slowing down or getting stuck in the changing conditions. Swix easy glide wax can be applied quite quickly while in the field by applying it to the ski base, starting at the tip and finishing at the tail. This type of wax may need to be applied every few hours when out on the slopes. *The Wilderness Shop provides Hot waxing for \$45 per pair of skis.*

