

Difficult points along the AAWT when following the path from North to South

The AAWT is less well marked from a north to south direction. This leads to greater navigational challenges and a greater chance of coming off track. Although variations in elevation are equally difficult regardless of the direction that the path is tackled from, an approach from the north has the disadvantage that the hardest half of the track, both in terms of elevation change and navigation, comes after several weeks of hiking. The following is a list of difficult navigational points when tackling the path from a north to south direction, without the help of a GPS or any other kind of electrical aid. Many of these difficulties are unique to a northerly approach and are not experienced when coming from the south. All reference points and pages refer to the maps used in *The Australian Alps Walking Track* by Chapman and Siseman (ISBN 978-1-920995-06-5).

1. Dead Horse Creek to Mac's Creek Track, 381.3km to 376.9km, p.145

Shortly after the campsite at the 381.3km point the path disappears. A thick covering of horse manure over the ground may have added to the difficulty of following the path along with fallen trees to the north east. Eventually the attempt to find the path was abandoned and a path was followed to the camp shown on p.166, further to the north-west along Dead Horse Creek. From this camp, Dead Horse Creek was crossed and a bush bash to the north-west led to the much better defined AWT where it runs along the top of a ridge before crossing Mac's Creek Track. The bush bash is steep but the scrub is reasonable, apart from when gaining the top of the ridge. This method is not easy but it is more fool proof than attempting a route to the north east if no path can be found. It has the advantage of always intersecting with Mac's Creek Track as long as a north westerly direction is followed.

2. Morass Creek to Lower Tablelands Road, 329km to 330.3km, p.132

Although only a short distance and unlikely to end an attempt at the AAWT, the area above the west bank of the river is confusing. The clear fire trail above the river can easily be found but fence lines obscure the more overgrown trail that connects from this trail to Lower Tablelands Road. If the main fire trail is followed to the south, this trail ends at a small clearing with a noisy water pump and fences cutting across the trail, the small clearing and across the fields to the south beyond. Unable to find the beginning of the fire trail that leads from here to Lower Tablelands Road, a westerly bearing was followed, crossing the clearing and all fences in between. After ten minutes the fire trail was intersected, running between two fences and partly overgrown. Even if the fire trail is missed a scrubby bush bash will still lead to the road. The difficulty of this area is more emotional than physical, with frustration being felt that something which looks so easy on paper can be so confusing.

3. Gill Creek to Gill Spur, 308.7km to 302km, p.128

Markers for the AAWT end abruptly in the middle of Gill Creek, with the last marker being a piece of pink tape tied to a tree hanging above the water. The difficulty here is that three spurs rise from the river, all heading in the same south westerly direction. The thickness of the scrub means that these spurs cannot be identified from down in the river bed. It is only possible to identify the correct spur after gaining several hundred meters in altitude. Due to the extreme thickness of the vegetation along the

spurs, getting to a point where one can identify the correct spur will take several hours and crossing from one spur to another is extremely tough and time consuming. If either of the two spurs to the south of the correct spur are taken, a south west bearing will ensure that one intersects with the Omeo Highway. Although the distance is short, between 3 to 5km, it will take at least six to seven hours to bash along these spur lines because of the extreme scrub. Fortunately Gill Spur Track is reasonably clear and is unlikely to be crossed over without being noticed.

4. Mt Hope Road AAWT turn off, 362.4km, p.141

A tree has fallen across the side of the road, blocking the AAWT from view. I tied blue string onto a branch of the tree as a marker but the string may not last. Look for the hairpin turn in the road and the fallen tree.

5. AAWT above the Twins Track to Murray's Hut Site, 217km to 216.6km, p.97

The AAWT here is very beautiful but following the Twins Track is a more effective alternative. Problems can arise at grid reference 01,01 because the ridge follows a very smooth curve to the south. Faint footpads along the spur follow this curve making the ridgeline all the more likely to be followed to the south, away from the AAWT. This problem can easily be avoided by taking and following a compass bearing on the Mt Murray South Track. This track can be seen, running down the face of Mt Murray, from several points before the ridgeline begins to curve.

6. Mt Selwyn Track, 203km to 199km, p.93

The track was seriously overgrown and has at some point also been burnt by fires. The combination of these two occurrences makes the track very frustrating and time consuming. Burnt trees have fallen across the path making progress very slow. Although navigation is not a problem at present, this may change in the future if the track is not cleared.

7. The Viking, 182.7km, p.85

The descent of The Viking literally involves a scramble down the side of a cliff. The marker, positioned in a tree, is easily missed if one is not aware of this. This kind of vertical descent is not something that is usually found on a track walk, making it all the more easy for one to mistakenly believe that the path has disappeared. The descent itself is not technically difficult, but it does require care. Finding the path is necessary because, although The Razor can clearly be seen from The Viking, a serious lack of easily reachable water in this area means that to attempt to scrub bash to The Razor without the help of a path would be very fool hardy.

8. Square Top to The Nobs, 147.5km to 141.3km, p.74-73

After point 147.5km, shortly after the AAWT turns south west, the AAWT disappears in the light scrub and grass. (Members of the Melbourne Bush Walkers Club warned that the path here was difficult to follow to the point of being non-existent. However other AAWT walkers coming from the south said that they did not encounter any problems). The problem can be overcome by making sure that Mt. Clear is

always kept to the north east and that the Jamieson River North Branch basin is always kept to the north. The path becomes clear after The Nobs and is unlikely to be crossed without being noticed due to the way that Nobs Spur makes a 90 degree turn to the north.

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