<u>Balingup-Grimwade Rd Walk Trail</u> (approximately 3 hours/ 13 km)

Overview

This walk will take you along a 4 km section of the Bibbulmun Track. The Track, which runs 964 km from Perth to Albany, is marked at regular intervals, with a black waugal on a yellow triangle (don't fall into the trap of thinking this is a "beware of snakes" sign!). Your return walk to Balingup will be along Grimwade Road, a quiet road with a "country lane" feel to it.   There is a steep section of Bibbulmun Track in the middle of the walk ……. referred to by some locals as "heartbreak hill".

The Walk

Starting at the General Store, take the Bibbulmun Track heading north out of Balingup – the Track will take you through the Balingup Oval. Each year in April, this Oval seethes with activity as the community comes together for the Small Farm Field Day. Over 200 trade, market, food and information stalls fill the area – with entertainment for all the family.

If the Field Day isn't on, follow the waugal up Brook Street; keeping the brook on your right all the way.   At the end of Brook St, bear right onto the track through the bush - enjoying the huge grass trees and tunnels of weeping willow. Across the brook, look for a rammed earth home and chalets. This is Jalbrook – home to alpacas and the annual Jalbrook Classic (held in November each year). The first Classic concert, performed in a natural amphitheater adjacent to the brook, was held in 1999.

Further on, you will find a shady resting place – provided to you by the Origins Centre. Sit awhile and enjoy some quiet contemplation.

When you reach the Origins Centre road, turn right and, following the waugal, head over the bridge (this bridge can flood in winter). Keep your eyes open for the waugal immediately after the bridge, that will guide you onto a footpath (to the left of the drive).

Another 10 minutes of walking and you will find yourself opposite PJs Bed & Breakfast, where you should pause to check out the 5 palm trees on the left. These trees were planted by the original settlers and mark the site of an old homestead (owned by the Thomas and Trotter families). In summer, you can often see a family of emus shading under the trees or drinking in the brook.   Moving on, just past PJs, check the hillside on the right.   Often you can see kangaroo grazing and boxing in this area – especially early in the morning.

The trees on the hill running alongside the Bibbulmun Track were planted in 1998 and are a good example of how quickly eucalypts grow!   At the top of the hill stands the entrance to Oakwood House (Balingup Brook). The drive, lined with poplar trees marks the spot where you leave Jayes Road and head down into the pine plantation. This land is managed by the Department of Conservation & Land Management and most of the trees were planted in the mid 1970s.

Keep following the Bibbulmun Track markers and you will quickly find yourself walking with Balingup Brook on your left. The section through the pine trees, can flood in winter but is worth the wet feet! If you are lucky, a flock of red-tailed black cockatoos will be feasting on the pine cones……but beware of falling objects when they are about!

You will eventually see a pool, and the remains of a bridge that used to lead across the brook to a homestead owned by the Ayers family. The homestead was vacated in the 1970s when a downturn in the dairy industry forced many farmers to sell their land to the Forestry Department. London Plane trees mark the route of the old driveway up to the homestead and a huge oak tree, near the pool, provides shelter to animals in summer.

Continue along the Bibbulmun Track for another 10 minutes – keeping the brook to your left. Climb over the style and, after another 100 mts, you will arrive at a footbridge built by CALM. In summer, you will wonder why the bridge is so wide – in winter, as the brook floods, you will discover the reason!

Now comes "heartbreak hill". This is a steep section of track that will take a bush walker of average fitness,15 minutes to climb. Make sure you stop and enjoy the view on the way up!

Congratulations! Now you are at the top, you can look forward to a flat section……followed by a downhill run all the way home! Stick to the Bibbulmun Track and keep a lookout for some of the many kangaroos that live in this area. Don't lose track of the waugal signs – if you don't see one at least every 10 minutes, retrace your steps.

After another 10 minutes walking (approx 1km) you will reach a bush track, turn left onto the track and then go immediately right, following the waugal.

The next kilometre is all downhill. Notice the change in the environment – the soil is more gravelly and vegetation is not as dense as on the southern side of the hill. You will also see lots of orchids in Spring time – and you don't even have to leave the Track to find them! Zamia palms and banksia are easily spotted all year round.

Keep following the waugal signs, past the "black stump", over a big log and across two vehicle tracks, until you reach a stunning avenue of grass trees. Formerly known as "blackboys", these trees grow up to 3 metres tall and stand on either side of the track. 300 metres further on, the Track meets the Grimwade Road and it is time to head for home. Turn left and follow the bitumen road – in Spring time look out for the Kangaroo Paws in the bush on the left hand side of the road.

Now, it's a straight 4 km walk down Grimwade Road towards Balingup. On both sides you will see magnificent rolling countryside but for something different, look to your right to see Ridgewood Deer Farm. You can even buy this local venison from Balingup Post Office!.

After a walk of around 30 minutes, you will see/hear South West Highway in the distance. Take left turn onto Walter Rd (running parallel to the Highway) and follow it for 1.2 km until you arrive back at Balingup Oval. Rejoin the Bibbulmun Track or follow the road back into Balingup.

For more information about tracks or local events, contact the Balingup Tourist Bureau.
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