



## Alligator Falls Track

**Nearest major town:** Townsville

**Access:** Head south for 25 km along Bruce Highway to Alligator Creek, turn right onto Alligator Creek Road and follow for 5.5 kms to park entrance.

From Ayr follow Bruce Highway for approximately 63 km to Alligator Creek, then left and follow road to park entrance. Camping permit required.

**Distance:** **Lookout:** 500 m. **Alligator Falls Track:** 17 km, 5–6 hrs, return, medium

**Condition:** earthen and rocky surface, steep in places, rock hopping, creek crossings

**Environment:** mountain vegetation and landscapes, lookout, creek & waterfall

**Rucksack:** good footwear, protective clothing, camera, water. Full camping gear including solid fuel stoves if camping overnight at Cockatoo or Alligator creeks.

TOWNSVILLE



Victoria had William Buckley who lived with Aborigines for over 30 years, Queensland had James Morrill who did the same for 17 years.

A carpenter's mate, Morrill worked onboard the barque Peruvian. He was part of the crew and passengers who left Sydney bound for China on 27 February 1846. In a cyclonic storm the Peruvian went down on Horseshoe Reef in the outer Great Barrier Reef off the coast from Shoalwater Bay, north of Rockhampton.

Twenty-two survivors got into a makeshift raft, somehow crossed the reef, then drifted northwards for over a month. Existing only on a diet of raw fish the death rate rose rapidly. When the craft finally beached near Cape Bowling Green, south of Townsville, only five remained alive. Morrill the carpenter, Miller the shipwright, White an apprentice boy, and Captain Pitkethley and his wife. Miller vanished while trying to paddle in search of help in an Aboriginal canoe and White died of malnutrition. The Pitkethleys and Morrill were luckier, they were adopted into tribes of wandering Aborigines. The Pitkethleys had joined a Cape Cleveland tribe, but both were dead within two years. Morrill was more fortunate – he lived with a neighbouring tribe, centred on Mount Elliot, between

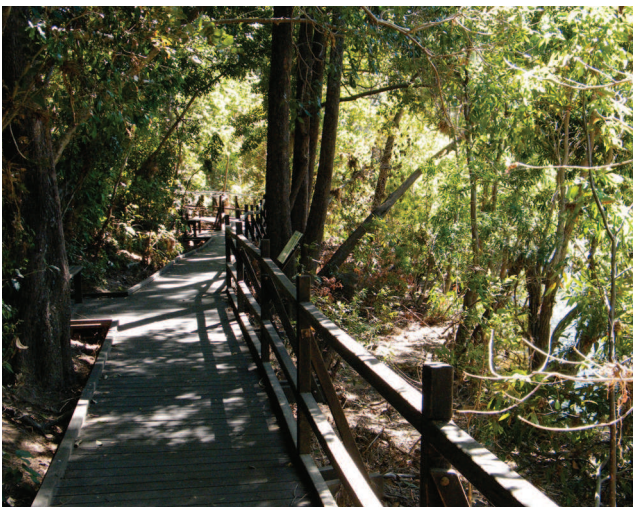
Top: Native figs grow from small branchlets off the trunk of the tree.

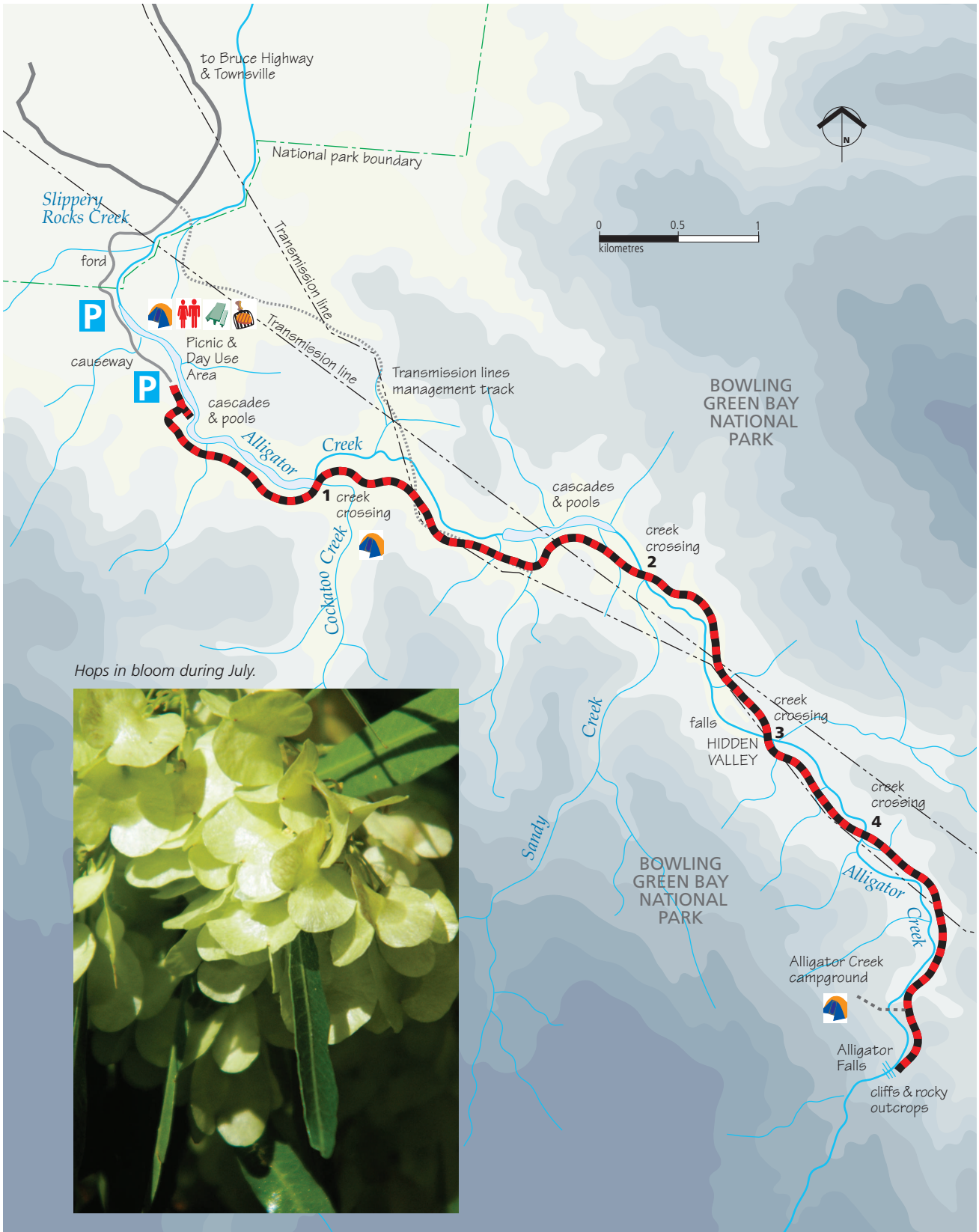
Bottom: Boardwalk flanking Alligator Creek..

Townsville and Bowen, for some 17 years. During 1861 prospects changed for Morrill when pastoralists pushed into the new frontier of North Queensland. Two years later his opportunity came when his hunting party of Aborigines came across two white station hands. He made himself known to the men by stating 'Don't shoot, mates, I'm a British object!' (Time away from his native language confused 'object' with 'subject').

Return to white society must have been very hard, but there was some recognition of what he had achieved. His knowledge of the country and experience of the Aborigines was often consulted. He joined the Department of Customs at Bowen and in 1864 was part of George Dalrymple's expedition to Cardwell. Later in the year he captained the Ariel taking the first cargo to Cleveland Bay (Townsville). In October 1865 he died at Bowen and was buried there.

Rocky bed of Alligator Creek from the lookout.







A number of local Aboriginals attended a mourning ceremony.

Part of the country he lived in and journeyed through stretched between the Black and Burdekin rivers and includes Mount Elliot area within the Bowling Green Bay National Park. Alligator, St Margarets, Major and Spring creeks draining Mount Elliot are perennial and would have been a constant supply of water, except in the driest of seasons.

Mount Elliot, one of Queensland's highest peaks, is a granite massif rising to 1342 m, has numerous small creeks and waterfalls on its eastern slopes. In some areas above 600 m are small patches of remnant rainforest.

Alligator Creek flows between two rocky mountains – Mount Elliot and Saddle Mountain and descends with waterfalls and cascades that pour into deep pools.

A single track heads out from the picnic area. A 500 m section leads to a lookout and a 17 km (return) section takes you well into the valley to the base of a waterfall.

#### Alligator Creek boardwalk and lookout

**Distance:** Boardwalk 200 m, lookout 500 m, easy

A wheelchair-accessible boardwalk leads from the day-use area to the bank of Alligator Creek. Then a sealed path flanks the creek, passing a few side tracks that lead to the water, to continue through an open eucalypt forest. Pass a track branching off to the right (heading to Cockatoo Creek) to climb slightly to vantage points over the creek. A lookout is 500 m from the picnic area.

During the wet season water rushes down the creek scouring the rocky walls of the valley. Vegetation grows right down to the high water mark. The bed of the creek is filled with a jumbled mass of rocks, debris and dry season growth.

*Between the boardwalk and the lookout are numerous pools. Mount Elliot is in the background.*



#### Alligator Falls Track

**Distance:** 17 km, 5–6 hrs return

Starts from the southern end of the day-use area. The Alligator Creek lookout is located 500 m along the track. As this track is long, walkers are advised to start early in the morning to ensure a daylight return.

At the signed track junction head into the open eucalypt forest to slowly climb and continue for approximately 2 km to Cockatoo Creek, an ideal place for a swim and overnight camp. Cockatoo Creek walk-in, self-sufficient camping area takes a maximum of 6 campers. Carry water and a gas/fuel stove. Much of the route follows a power transmission line maintenance track as it weaves up the valley.

From Cockatoo Creek the track roughly flanks the creek, following powerlines through open woodland to Hidden Valley. Once the site of an old homestead, long since gone, old mango trees and a clearing are the only evidence of occupation. Agile wallabies and rock-wallabies might be spotted here as they feed closeby. The creek valley narrows and walkers need to cross the creek at four spots. Water can be ankle-deep or knee deep. If any deeper best to turn around and head back.

After another 2 km from the clearing, the route arrives at a series of steps climbing through rock-strewn bush. After some rock hopping and boulder-scrambling the track exits the bush to emerge at the base of a massive granite cliff face and the falls. The falls are actually a series of steep cascades. There is no access to the base or above the falls.

Alligator Falls walk-in camping site (just off the track) is for self-sufficient campers only, with a maximum of 6 campers. Take water and a gas/fuel stove.

Return by the same route.



## Magnetic Island

**Nearest major town:** Townsville

**Access:** Access is by passenger ferry and/or car/passenger ferry. The passenger ferry makes up to 19 return trips daily and the car/passenger ferry up to 7 return trips daily.

**Passenger Ferry:** Sealink Qld provides the passenger service that takes approximately 25 mins. Sealink departs Townsville from the Breakwater Terminal, Sir Leslie Theiss Drive, Townsville. Sealink departs Magnetic Island from Nelly Bay Harbour.

**Motor Vehicle Ferry:** Fantasea Cruising Magnetic takes approximately 45 mins. Departs Townsville from Ross Street, South Townsville. Departs Magnetic Island from Nelly Bay Harbour. Hire vehicles, including 4WDs available on Magnetic Island. Local bus service also available.

TOWNSVILLE

Lieutenant James Cook must have thought Magnetic Island contained massive iron deposits as, recorded in his log, his compass 'did not traverse well' when sailing the Endeavour northwards along the coast in 1770. Instead of iron the continental island is mostly granite. The granite is of the Early Permian age about 298 to 270 million years old and the island is a mountain remnant that was isolated from the mainland about 10000 to 6000 years ago when the sea level rose during the Ice Age. Granite tors dot the landscape.

The summit of Mount Cook is 496 m and sandy beaches interspersed with tongues of granite form tight picturesque bays. Fringing reefs are just offshore. Separated by only 8 km wide Cleveland Bay, Magnetic Island provides an escape from the city with just over half the island having national park status.

Human occupation has a long history as art sites, shell middens and stone tools of the Wulgurukaba people have been found in a number of bays around 'Yunbenun', Magnetic Island. The Wulgurukaba 'canoe' people, occupied the island and adjacent mainland for a long, long time. Permanent camps were established at a number of bays and Wulgurukaba legends tell of annual migration to the mainland to avoid contact with travelling, head-hunting tribes from Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait.

Top: Rock wallabies are numerous at Geoffrey Bay.

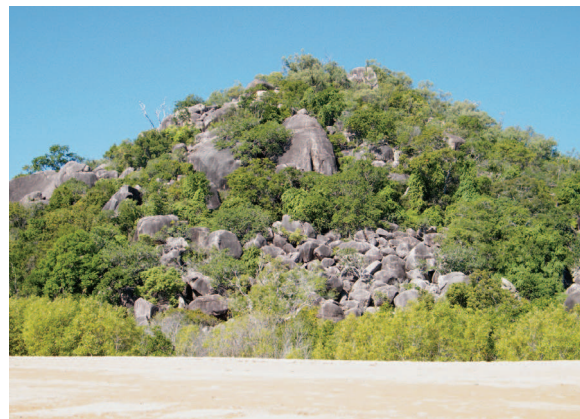


Rocky, Nelly and Geoffrey bays from Hawking Point, southern Magnetic Island.

Its European past has included hoop pine logging and a quarantine station. Early tourism was conducted by Harry Butler and his family who settled at Picnic Bay in 1876. Robert Hayles built the first hotel and started the first regular ferry service to Townsville during the 1890s. Farming and coastal defences during Second World War then followed.

Not to be compared with more remote Barrier Reef islands Magnetic remains popular with visitors regardless of their interests. Added to its closeness to a major city Magnetic Island has a lot of offer walkers. From easy short walks to more challenging and longer tracks – through the bush and around the coast.

Birding enthusiasts have a good chance of sighting many of the 180 species that have been recorded. Red-tailed black cockatoos, sulphur-crested cockatoos, orange-footed scrubfowl, white-bellied sea-eagles, magpie geese, pied currawongs and brolgas are the largest birds, and blue-winged and laughing kookaburras, brahminy and whistling kites follow closely behind. The iconic beach stone-curlews have perhaps the most haunting and eerie call of all as it wanders around the coast. Rock wallabies are seen regularly on rocks at Geoffrey Bay, while koalas snooze in trees particularly along The Forts Walk. Sea turtles and dugongs feed in the extensive seagrass beds surrounding the island.



Granite hillside at the eastern end of Horseshoe Bay, northern Magnetic Island.





## Hawking Point Lookout Track

**Access:** Magnetic Island Bus Service provides a regular service from the Ferry Terminal to Picnic Bay. Follow Picnic Street (2nd street back from the beach) to its end. It is well signposted. The track does not extend to the coast as the Rocky Bay extension is closed.

**Distance:** 1.2 kms, 1 hr, return, mainly easy with some medium.

**Condition:** earthen, rocky and sandy surface, undulating terrain

**Environment:** coastal vistas

**Rucksack:** carry drinking water, sun protection, insect repellent, camera

TOWNSVILLE



*Hawking Point, at the eastern end of Picnic Bay, juts well into Cleveland Bay and is the highest point on the southern coast. Granite boulders line the point's shore line and beaches of Picnic Bay and Rocky Bay extend from each side. One track leads to lookout points.*

From the eastern (Nelly Bay) end of Picnic Street climb a few rock steps to ascend up and around massive granite boulders along a narrow track, rocky in places. After a short distance the track detours around the base of a massive wall of rock to remain clear of an unstable area. The route continues through dry eucalypt woodland to emerge at an area of low shrubs and huge granite tors high above Rocky Bay. This unfenced area provides excellent vistas to the north-east overlooking the bay and extending to Nelly Bay.

The track then makes a gradual swing to the right and then winds up the southern slope to the top of a large tor, affording views over the island to Nelly and Geoffrey bays and back over Picnic Bay with its jetty, Cleveland Bay, Many Peaks Range and towards Townsville. The last climb up to the top is between granite boulders to a massive sloping slab of granite with iron rails and mesh for support. Stay on the track and be aware that boulders may be unstable.

*Top: Looking south-west over Picnic Bay.*

*Right: Rocky Bay from the unfenced lookout.*

Hawking Point extends further into the water but the track ends at the lookout.

In the lee waters of Hawking Point lies the remains of the steel-hulled ship *George Rennie*. Built in Middlesex, England in 1885 as a paddle steamer it was converted into a lighter in 1896 and used for transporting coal to Townsville. In 1902 it was towed to Hawking Point then scuttled, to serve as a breakwater for Picnic Bay. Some remains of the ship can be seen at low tide from Picnic Bay beach.

Return by the same route.

