

Autumn colour in the mountains Saturday 2 May 2020

Visit to Blue Mountains Botanic Garden - Mount Tomah and then gardens in Mt Wilson

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Summary

This one day excursion will take us to two places replete with autumn colour, formal gardens, rock formations, recovering bush and a talk by an expert macro photographer. First stop is the Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens on Bell's Line of Road, and the second is Mount Wilson gardens. There is plenty else to see on the way. Note: There are no lunch places at Mt Wilson, so either bring lunch, or eat at the Botanic Gardens (RSVP required).

First stop: Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens

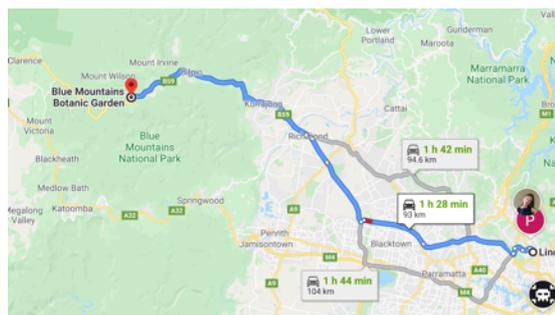


Located on Bells Line of Rd, Mount Tomah NSW 2758 (Googlemaps: FC6C+6P Mount Tomah, New South Wales), this 28 HA garden is a showcase of local and imported cool climate plants and alpine rainforest.

It takes about 1.5 hours to get there from Lindfield, with the M2/M7 being generally the quickest. Use the Richmond Road exit from the M7.

Saturday morning traffic can be a nightmare, so the earlier you leave is likely to be the better, particularly getting onto the M2.

I recommend leaving home about 7.30am or so, to avoid this traffic. See larger map at end of document.



On the way, there are a couple of stops.

- Bilpin Fruit Bowl – on the left hand side of the road as you head into Bilpin. Has the most delicious home made apple pies, plus coffee. This business had much of its orchard burnt in the recent fires, so you can do them a favour and buy a warm apple pie. They open at 8am.
- Across the road is the Pines Orchard with café with similar food and a very amenable owner! (
- Given Mt Wilson has no food places, you could buy lunch at one of these places, unless you have lunch at the Botanic Garden!)



11am Presentation by Greg Bourke, Manager/Curator, in Waratah Room in Visitors Centre

A highlight of the visit to the gardens will be a presentation by Greg Bourke, the Curator/Manager of the garden, who is an expert on carnivorous plants and photographing them. He will present to us his macro (and landscape) images, along with his tips on macro, cameras etc.



You can see more of his images on his Instagram site. <https://www.instagram.com/greg.bourke/?hl=en>.

Lunch: 12.30 – 1.15pm or so at the Botanic Gardens Café

Either Bring your own lunch and eat in the garden.

The Botanic Gardens has a café although service can be a bit slow, so we will have to 'pre-book' to ensure we aren't delayed.

Another option is to have a picnic lunch in Mount Wilson (Windyridge) – assuming you are bringing your own food.

NOTE: THERE ARE NO FOOD PLACES AT MOUNT WILSON.

Travel to Mount Wilson

After lunch at the garden, we will travel to Mount Wilson (20 mins), and visit several gardens.

Continue along the Bells Line of Road and turn right after about 10 mins at Mount Wilson Road (see map at end of this document).

Many gardens are open, although Windyridge and Bebeah are expecting us, both are stunning gardens.

You'll see the forest recovery on the way.



About Mount Wilson

There are many picnic spots where you can enjoy your (BYO) picnic lunch including Cathedral Reserve and Happy Valley, 1km further towards Mt Irvine.

There are NO shops, cafes, permanent coffee shops, petrol stations, ATMs or medical services. The nearest are in Lithgow or Mt Victoria. **Please remember to bring your own water.**

Mobile reception can also be dodgy.



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There are public toilets at Silva Plana (just as you enter Mt Wilson), the Fire Station, Founders Corner, Waterfall Reserve and Cathedral Reserve.

Along the main road of Mount Wilson should be your first glimpse of autumn colour!

See the last page of this document for a map of Mount Wilson.

Windyridge

This is a small garden, just under five acres of beautifully landscaped gardens. It's located at 25-27 Queens Ave Mount Wilson 2786. It is well sign-posted. See map at end of this document.

(<https://www.facebook.com/windyridgegarden/>)

Wai and Rodger purchased Windyridge in 1995 and have been slowly building the garden up over the years.



The first three years were spent scrubbing out the old, sick and dead trees. After that the construction of the paths, terraces and building structures were done. And then the planting began packed with beautifully landscaped gardens of cool climate plants, water features and sculpture.

This image below was taken in February as the rain poured down! The one above was taken in May several years ago.

The fee for the garden is \$10 which also gets you tea/coffee and biscuits. You will pay on arrival or when getting your afternoon tea. Rodger has also invited you to picnic lunch (BYO) in the gardens. Toilets are available at the garden.



Bebeah

Located at: 60 The Avenue, Mount Wilson NSW 2786. Fees are \$10 for entry.



This second garden sprawls over 5 HA with the precise geometry of tightly clipped hedges of azaleas, camellias and box.

Bebeah is one of the original large garden estates of Mt Wilson, having been built by Edward Cox in 1880. The name 'Bebeah' is believed to be an Aboriginal word meaning 'a place where stone axes are found'.

The garden has been rejuvenated, by Barry Byrne, the current owner for the last nineteen years, into an important and rare Australian example of a formal country garden estate of imposing scale and a grand sense of design.

Magnificent specimen trees, some 120 years old, abound: oaks, magnolias, elm, conifers, cherries, dogwoods (there are two such trees near the main

lawn that are reputed to be the first such specimens planted in Australia).

At the centre of the garden is a large lake, bound on three sides by tiered plantings of wide varieties, colours and textures. As is often the case in this garden, tantalizing flashes to the lake are proffered to the visitor before it suddenly and unexpectedly unfolds.



(Note: the image above was taken in February in the rain so colours are not as spectacular as what we hope to get in May!)

The main house is late Victorian Gothic and blends into the landscape. Two small cottages - one of which is available for rent - are nestled on the eastern boundary, under the shelter of ancient gnarled oaks and edged by a clipped laurel hedge of enormous length.

(<https://www.myopengarden.com.au/openGarden.jsp?id=1568>)

What else to do in Mount Wilson?

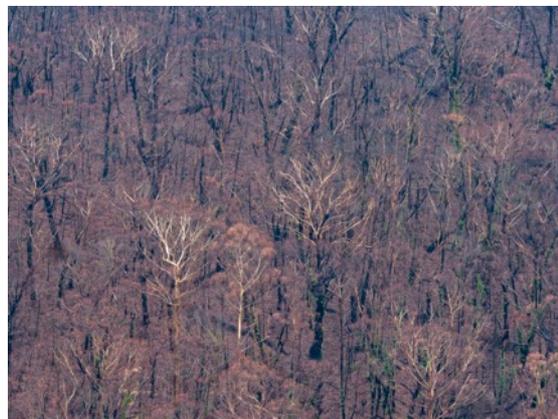
Wynnes Rocks Lookout

See map for the location at 40 Wynnes Lookout Rd, Mount Wilson NSW 2786.



If you've got time, there is a lovely lookout, albeit recovering from fire, called Wynnes Rocks Lookout.

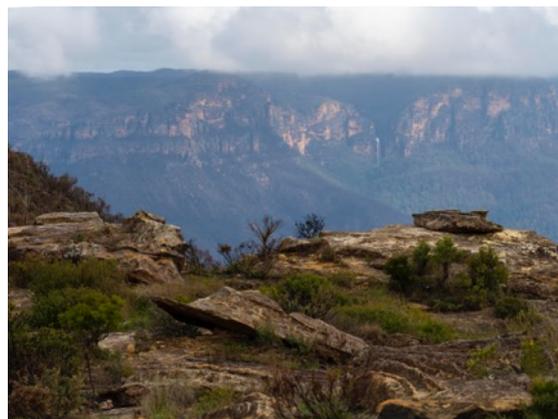
This gives you outstanding views over the mountains. You'll be able to see close up the regeneration of the native bush.



Mount Banks Picnic Area

On your way home, if you have time, you could drop in at Mount Banks Picnic Area, part of the Blue Mountains National Park. (Of course, you can go here on the way to Mount Wilson as well!) Its roughly 15 mins from Mount Wilson on the Bells Line of Road (on the right hand side of the road when travelling from Mt Wilson).

There is a gravel road leading down to the Picnic area. Part of this road was damaged by rain when I visited, so I'd suggest stopping half way down.



There are fantastic views as well as wonderful rock formations with rock-based shrubs and small trees.



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Enter Mount Banks into Google Maps to located the turnoff.



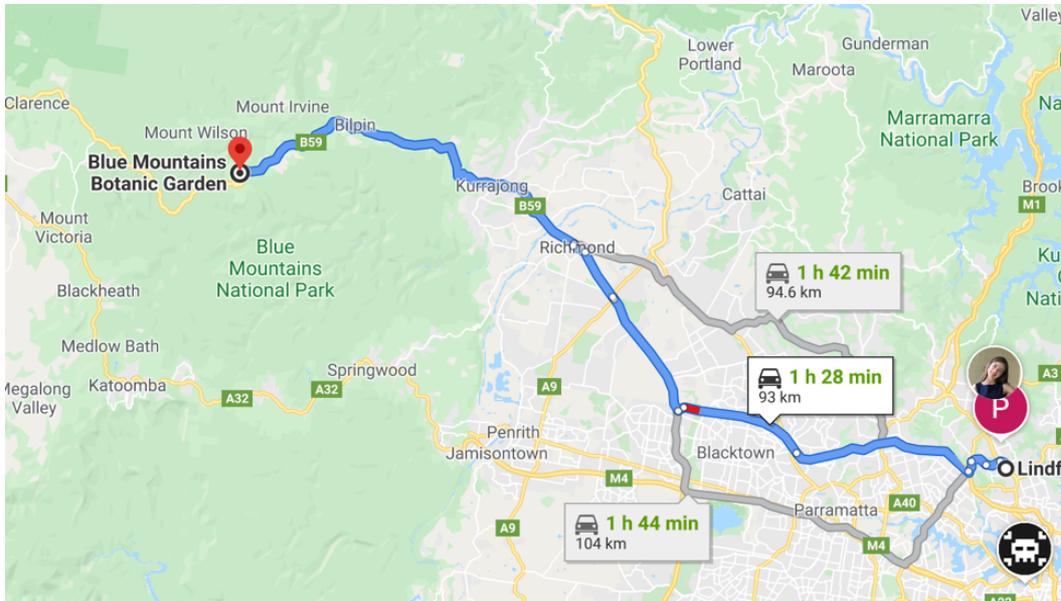
What to bring for the whole trip

- Walking shoes/hat/sunscreen/umbrella
- Camera gear
- Drinking water
- Lunch unless you are having it at the Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens
- Thermos and tea and coffee for the afternoon

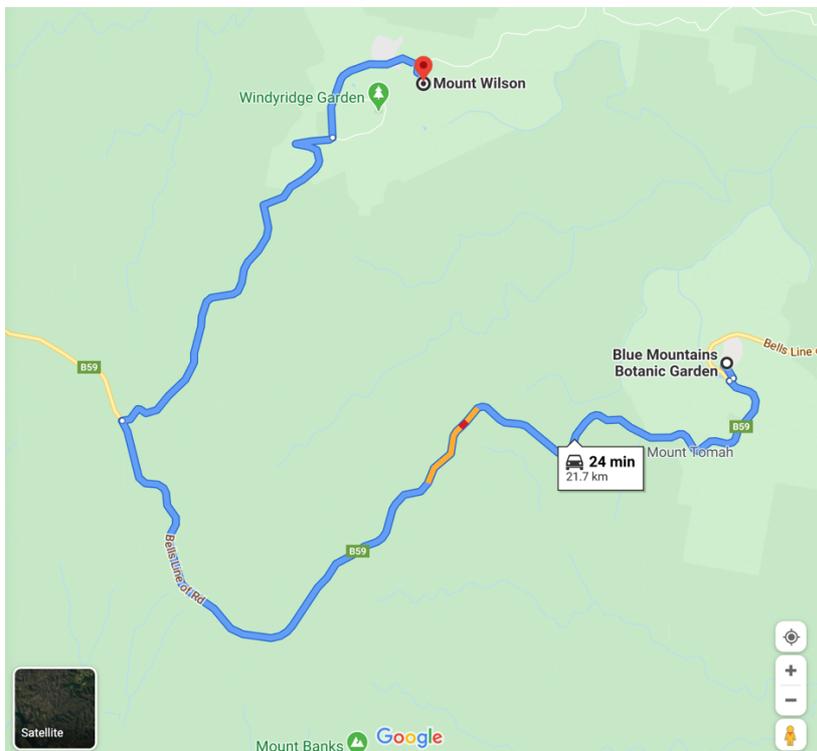


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Getting to Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens from Lindfield



Getting to Mount Wilson from Blue Mountains Botanic Gardens





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Map of Mount Wilson – you enter from the bottom left via Mount Wilson Road

