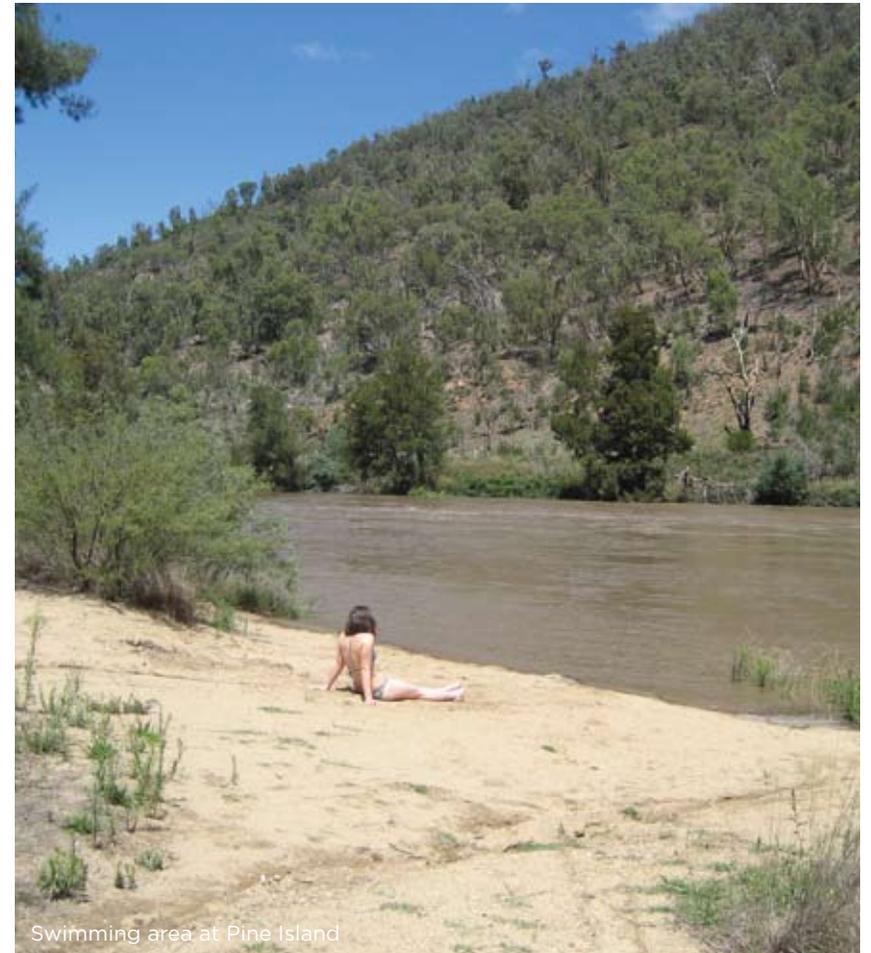


# The Murrumbidgee Corridor

The Murrumbidgee Corridor runs along the western side of southern Canberra and provides walks of various lengths. It is possible to combine two or more of the walks mentioned here or to venture further up or down the river. The corridor allows for walks along high cliffs as well as along the riverside. Wildflowers and bird songs accompany you as you walk. All walks in this chapter follow a part of the Murrumbidgee Discovery Trail and are marked with distance posts. There are swimming and picnic areas with facilities at Point Hut Crossing, Kambah Pool and Casuarina Sands.



Red Rocks Cliffs



Swimming area at Pine Island

# 26 Pine Island North to Point Hut Crossing

A return trip or as a single journey in either direction with a car shuffle, the direction taken for this walk might depend on the time of day as it is much more pleasant to walk with the sun behind than in front. The path follows the Murrumbidgee River from Pine Island to Point Hut, so that the sound of the water is a constant feature of the walk. The path is well-signposted with distances to and from clearly marked. Keep an eye out for wildlife as snakes and lizards tend to sun themselves on the warm path, especially in summer. There are picnic areas and places to swim at both ends of the walk. This area has been revegetated since the bushfires of 2003, which destroyed a significant part of the plant life along the corridor.

## At a glance

**Grade:** Easy

**Time:** 1.5 hrs

**Distance:** 4.2 km (one way)

**Conditions:** Fairly exposed with some shade at either end

**Opening times:** Pine Island car parks open 0800–2100 daily

### Getting there:

**Car:** Enter Pine Island Reserve via Athllon Dr and Don Dunstan Dr, continuing around to the right to the Pine Island North car park

**Bus:** Routes 18 and 318 (weekdays) depart from all interchanges, bus 63 departs Woden and Tuggeranong (weekdays) and 967 and 968 depart Tuggeranong on weekends – all stop on Scollay St, Greenway, leaving a 15 – 20 minute walk to Pine Island

**Dogs:** Permitted at Point Hut only, on leash, with an area designated for 'off the leash'



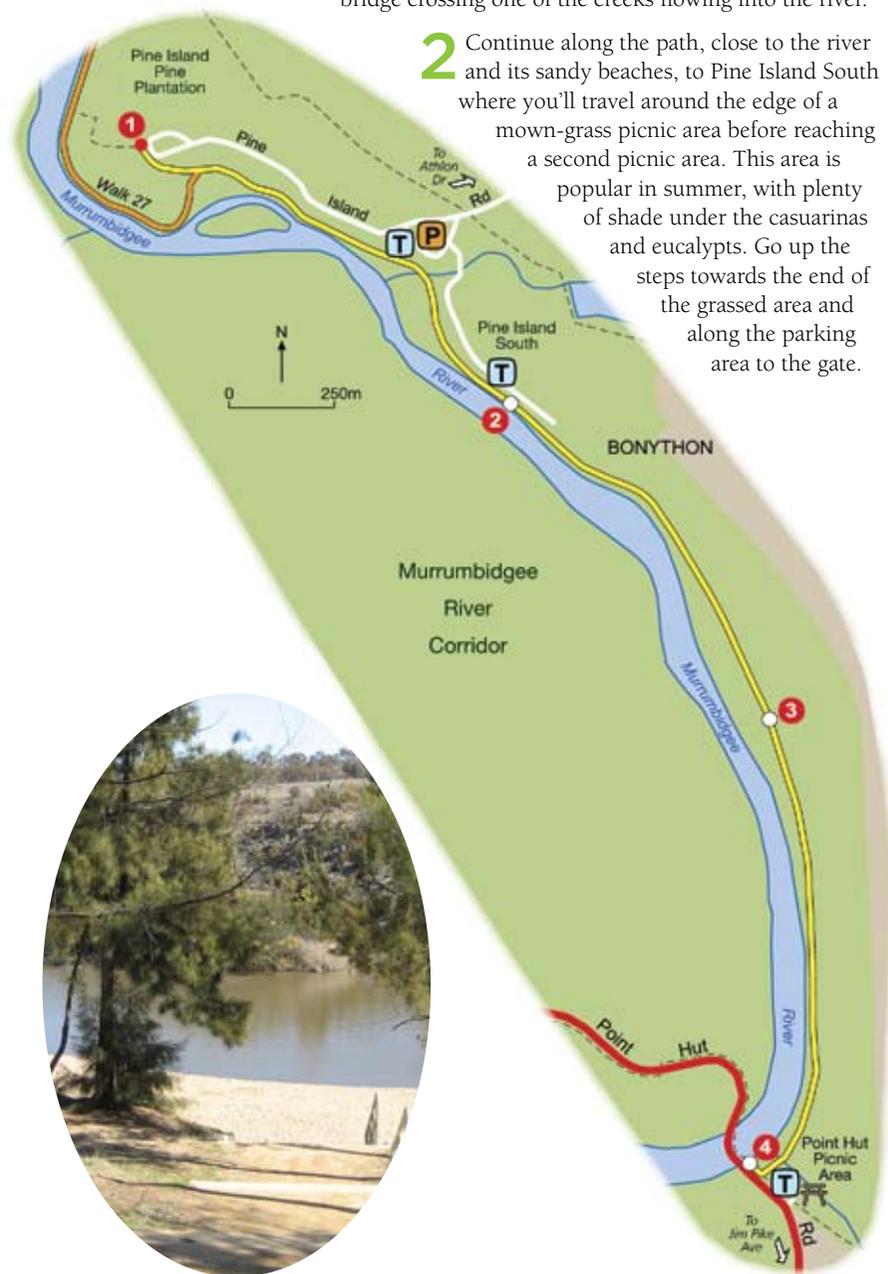
View to the south

## 26 Pine Island North to Point Hut Crossing

### Walk directions

**1** The path starts near a signpost to the left of the first parking area at Pine Island North and follows a ridge above the river down to a playground and picnic area. The gravel path winds past the toilet block's colourful exterior and over a small metal bridge crossing one of the creeks flowing into the river.

**2** Continue along the path, close to the river and its sandy beaches, to Pine Island South where you'll travel around the edge of a mown-grass picnic area before reaching a second picnic area. This area is popular in summer, with plenty of shade under the casuarinas and eucalypts. Go up the steps towards the end of the grassed area and along the parking area to the gate.



## 26 Pine Island North to Point Hut Crossing

### Walk variation

For a shorter walk (approximately 2.5 kilometres one way), start or finish at the picnic area near the gate at Pine Island South.

**3** Once through the gate the path rises, meandering along above the river before crossing another small bridge. This part of the path is through open bush with the Brindabella Mountains dark blue on the western horizon. In spring and summer, flowering native plants add extra colour to the walk. As with most of the walks along the river, small and large burrows – sometimes under the path itself – are a regular feature, housing rabbits and wombats.

**4** As the path nears Point Hut Crossing it draws closer to the river

and there is more shade. There is an off-leash dog exercise area to the left. Pass through a gate and cross over a stone bridge, where rock reinforcing has been constructed as a protection against erosion

damage during flooding. There is a shady picnic area as you reach Point Hut. Take a look at the Crossing itself. In times of heavy rain it can be dangerous as it may be under water with a very strong current flowing.



Colourful Toilet Block



Point Hut Crossing

## 26 Pine Island North to Point Hut Crossing



Murrumbidgee River

### Canberra environment – Eastern Brown Snake

The Eastern Brown Snake (*Pseudonaja textilis*), while highly venomous, rarely bites humans as the snake will usually move away if it is not harassed. Adults range from light brown to almost black with cream to yellow bellies, while young snakes can have dark grey or black bands across their bodies, particularly across their heads. They are active in warmer weather and will often lie on rocks or pathways. They attack from a raised position and are very fast. The Eastern Brown Snake can be found in most, if not all, nature reserves in the ACT. They feed mainly on small rodents, lizards, frogs and birds.

# 27 Kambah Pool to Pine Island North

One of the best walks along the river, this can be done as a return trip or as a single trip in either direction, with a car shuffle. Much of the walk takes place high above the Murrumbidgee, with glimpses of the river below, through a variety of landscapes. As you near Pine Island the path draws close to the river. It is hard to believe that a large town centre and major government offices exist only a short distance across the fields. The track is well-marked with arrows and posts every 200 metres giving the distance remaining in both directions. The first section has some shade but most of the walk is in the open. While rewarding at all times of the year, the walk is particularly lovely in spring when the different varieties of wattle are in bloom.

## At a glance

**Grade:** Medium

**Time:** 2.5 - 3.5 hrs

**Distance:** 9.4 km one way

**Opening times:** Pine Island car parks open 0800-2100 daily

**Conditions:** Path is sometimes rocky and can be fairly steep parts with some stepped sections - little shade

### Getting there:

**Car:** Enter Kambah Pool Reserve from Kambah Pool Rd. Take the Kambah Pool Rd and park in first parking area on the right - to start at Pine Island, enter Pine Island Reserve via Athllon Dr and Don Dunstan Dr, continuing around to the right to the Pine Island North car park

**Bus:** No buses to Kambah Pool (for Pine Island North see instructions for previous walk)



Wattle lines the path in Spring

## 27 Kambah Pool to Pine Island North

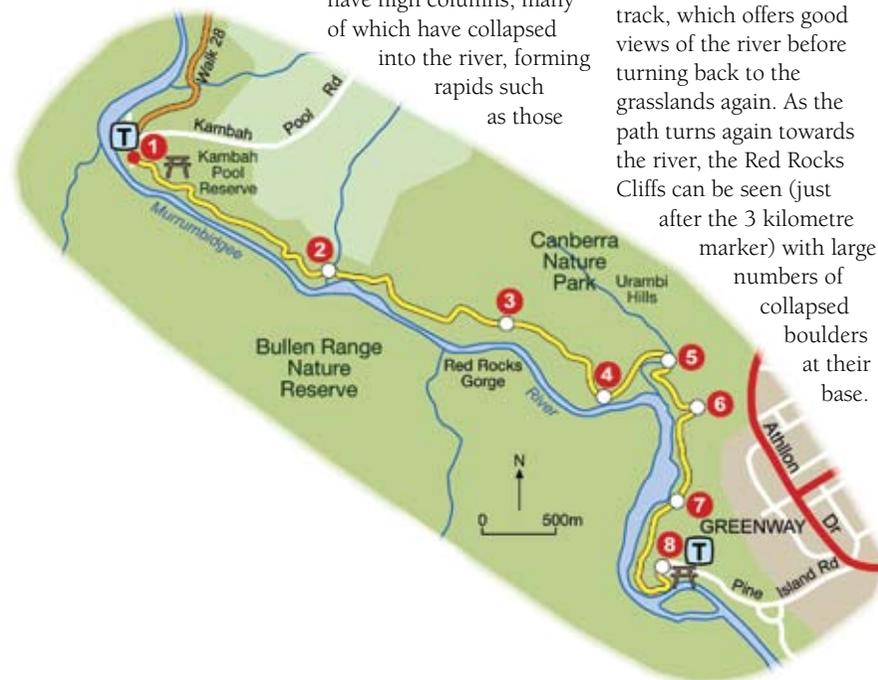
### Walk directions

**1** Start from the left side of the parking area above Kambah Pool and enter the Bullen Range Nature Reserve. This section winds along the hillside high above the river, which can be glimpsed below. The effects of fire and drought can be seen in the sparseness of the vegetation on many of the hillsides. The track winds up and down the hill, crossing footbridges over creeks and gullies.

**2** Steeper sections are aided by log steps that have been set at intervals to aid ascent/descent and to prevent erosion. Some parts of the walk pass through open grassland, as the path turns away from the river, some closely hemmed with wattles. After crossing a longer wooden footbridge over a creek, the path climbs to a point where a detour leads to a lookout over Red Rocks Gorge. The cliffs along the river have high columns, many of which have collapsed into the river, forming rapids such as those

visible below. There are a number of rapids in this section of the river, enjoyed by canoeists and rafters who have given them unusual nicknames such as Junkyard and Shredder. This lookout gives views of the Murrumbidgee River, particularly after heavy rain when the water rushes through the rapids.

**3** The sound of the rapids can be heard for quite a while after returning to the marked track, which offers good views of the river before turning back to the grasslands again. As the path turns again towards the river, the Red Rocks Cliffs can be seen (just after the 3 kilometre marker) with large numbers of collapsed boulders at their base.



### Walk variations

For those who wish to walk to Red Rocks Gorge and then return to Kambah Pool (4.4 km in total, a 2 hour trip), walk to the lookout (see waypoints 1 and 2 above) then retrace your steps to Kambah Pool. Pine Island North to Tuggeranong Dry Stone Wall is an easy 5 km return walk (2.5 km each way), taking 1.5 hrs in total.

## 27 Kambah Pool to Pine Island North

Again the path turns, passing down a gully and up to a gate. Climb through the gate into paddocks of leased farmland (sometimes complete with cows), eventually crossing a narrow two-plank sleeper bridge. As the path climbs and turns, you can see the grass-covered Urambi Hills on your left. The path turns back towards the river before looping to the left. The roofs of the Tuggeranong Town Centre can be seen in the distance with the river winding below.

**4** The path curves towards the Urambi Hills. Follow this through a gate and down a track heading straight for the Urambi Hills (ignore the inviting mown grass strip near the fence). Continue until you meet a fence. Turn right, keeping the fence on your left for about 50 metres and through a gateway. (If there has been a lot of rain or if a bridge is preferred, follow signs to the bridge.) Immediately after the gate, turn to the right and follow the grassed area alongside the fence

(no track but marked with arrows at relevant points). Follow the fences around to the left (Tuggeranong Creek runs along the other side of the fence, shaded by Casuarinas) to a gate which leads down to the creek.

**5** The rock steps lead to a natural 'bridge' of boulders across the creek which is reasonably easy to cross, but it does involve stepping from rock to rock. After crossing turn right and follow the path alongside the creek, through a gate and towards the junction of Tuggeranong Creek and the Murrumbidgee River.



Wombat Holes

**6** At one point, as the path nears the junction of creek and river, the 'Hobbiton' of Canberra can be seen on the opposite bank, where the earth is dotted with large circular wombat holes. There are large numbers of these holes in the Murrumbidgee Corridor, often dug into the ground alongside the path. A dry stone wall, opposite this junction, runs up the slope away from the river. Go round the end of the wall, through a gate, and walk 50 metres or so back along the other side of the wall before turning to the right.

## 27 Kambah Pool to Pine Island North

**7** Continue around to the right past more wombat holes. The path is now fairly close to the river, quite sandy and obviously a track that wombats use. Part of the path winds first through casuarinas and blackberries before reaching a shady spot next to the river. The path continues alongside

the river and into more open country through grasses (waist high in spring and summer) and wattles. There is an access point to the river in this section, if you wish to go swimming.

**8** After passing the sign for river access, you have a choice of paths.

Take the sharp left turn on the Pine Island loop track to Pine Island North, following the river at first and then rising in a fairly steep, sharply winding path away from the river. (The alternative path is slightly shorter and leads uphill before following a management road to the right.)



### Canberra history - Tuggeranong Dry Stone Wall

Running up the slope away from the river and then turning at right angles towards the Tuggeranong Town Centre is the Tuggeranong Dry Stone Wall, ending just before Anketell St and Athllon Drive. The wall was built by convicts between 1867 and 1875 to mark the boundaries of two large rural properties in the area, Yarralumla (owned by the Campbell family) and Lanyon/Tuggeranong (owned by the Cunningham family). The part of the wall nearest the river has been rebuilt, while nearer to Athllon Drive more of the original wall remains. Small sections of the wall have been rebuilt on either side of Athllon Drive, on the northern side of the Anketell Street traffic lights.

### Canberra environment - Common wombat

One of Australia's many marsupials, the common wombat (*Vombatus ursinus*) can be found in Canberra, particularly along the Murrumbidgee Corridor. Smaller than its cousin the Hairy Nosed Wombat, this bare-nosed variety feeds mainly on grasses, supplemented with roots and bark. The common wombat is a stocky animal that grows to about one metre in length. They are nocturnal creatures and so, on daytime walks, the large burrows and cube-ish faeces (often neatly placed on bare rocks, to the edge of a wooden step or on the path itself) are the only evidence of their presence in the area.

# 28 Kambah Pool to Casuarina Sands

This walk follows the river along the *Murrumbidgee Discovery Track*, through a variety of landscapes with the Murrumbidgee in sight and/or hearing for most of the way. The first part of the walk, around ridges and deep gullies, stretches high above the river, offering long, sweeping views, with the mountains in the distance. The second part of the walk, while having some higher sections, passes mostly through grassland and alongside the river, offering close views of the water with the steep slopes of the mountain range rising from the western bank. Wildflowers and native plants bloom along the walk for most of the year. The walk can be done one way with a car shuffle or as a return walk from either Kambah Pool or Casuarina Sands. Please note the walk is through remote regions, offering no facilities.

## At a glance

**Grade:** Medium to Hard

**Time:** 5.5 - 7 hrs

**Distance:** 13.8 km one way

**Conditions:** Some sections less defined, with wombat holes on or near the path – a walking stick is of use in testing the ground ahead (arrow posts at regular intervals and posts marked with distances to/from destination in both directions)

### Getting there:

**By car:** Enter Kambah Pool Reserve from the Kambah Pool Rd and take the first left into a small parking area – if starting from Casuarina Sands, park at the end of the first turn to the left after entering the area (close to the Cotter Pumping Station)



Mountain range rises steeply on the western side of the river

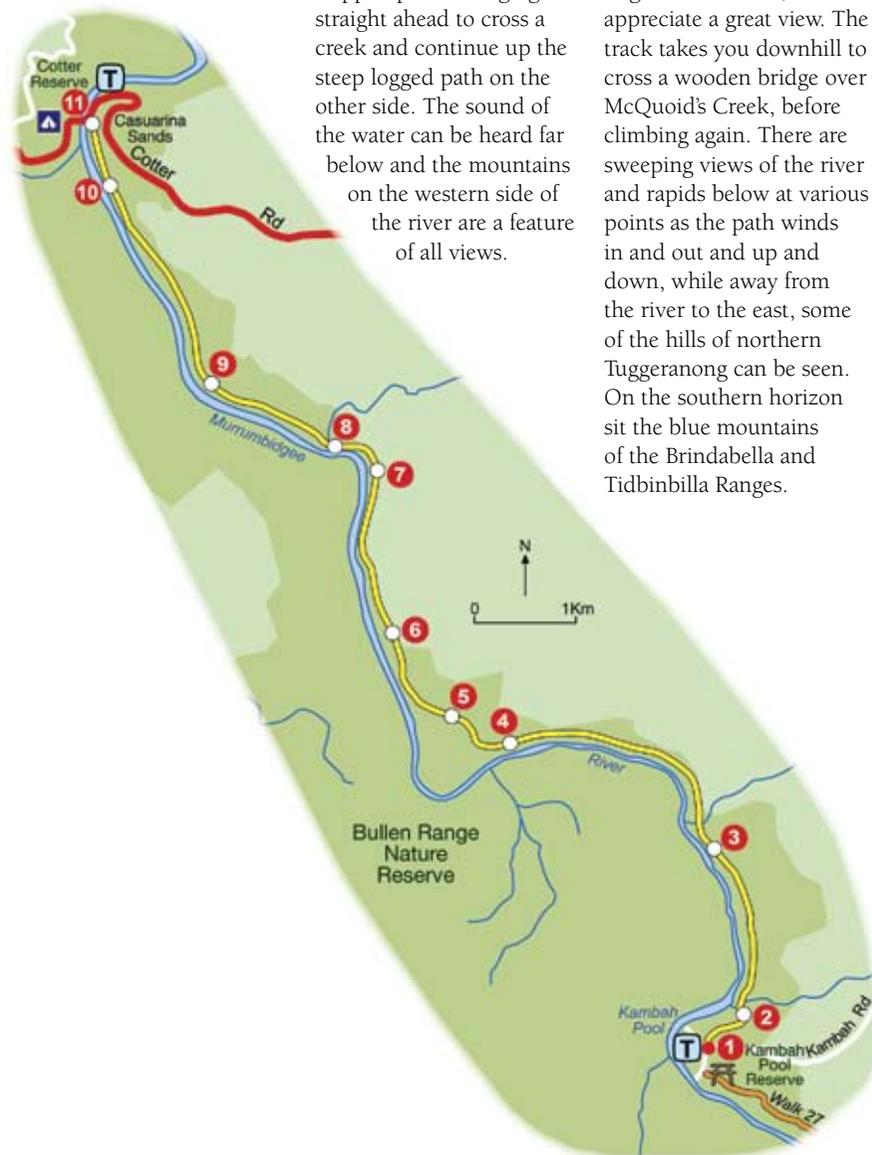
## 28 Kambah Pool to Casuarina Sands

### Walk directions

**1** Start from the marked entrance across the road from the Kambah Pool parking area. The single track is narrow and winds high above the Murrumbidgee, through

open grasslands with a few trees. The track curves away from the river and then returns down a gentle slope, skirting the nude bathing beach far below. Turn right following a log-stepped path through grass straight ahead to cross a creek and continue up the steep logged path on the other side. The sound of the water can be heard far below and the mountains on the western side of the river are a feature of all views.

**2** Continue up some stone steps through thick vegetation (mainly wattle) for extensive views below. Ants are busy along all high sections of the track and it is unwise to linger on ant nests, even to appreciate a great view. The track takes you downhill to cross a wooden bridge over McQuoid's Creek, before climbing again. There are sweeping views of the river and rapids below at various points as the path winds in and out and up and down, while away from the river to the east, some of the hills of northern Tuggeranong can be seen. On the southern horizon sit the blue mountains of the Brindabella and Tidbinbilla Ranges.





Near Lunchtime Creek

**3** The track winds downhill to some dead trees and a stepping stone crossing of a creek, followed inevitably by a sharp rise with views of the rocky western shore of the river as it turns to the west. There is a stepped path up through grassland to a small group of boulders and trees, which the path skirts. The best views are seen at the next rise where a rocky outcrop of large boulders marks a lookout providing views along the river in both directions.

There is a wooden seat on which you can relax and enjoy your surroundings.

**4** Return to the path from the lookout and continue, crossing a gully by means of another wooden bridge, once again followed by a steep climb. The path curves around, up and down past two more bridges. The next section of the walk is much easier going. Ignore tracks to left and right and continue ahead to an arrow post, climb-through fence

and gate. After the gate, the path continues on a mown strip of green grass straight ahead, eventually curving around to the right and down a slope to a fence and gate. If in doubt, look out for arrow markers or distance posts.

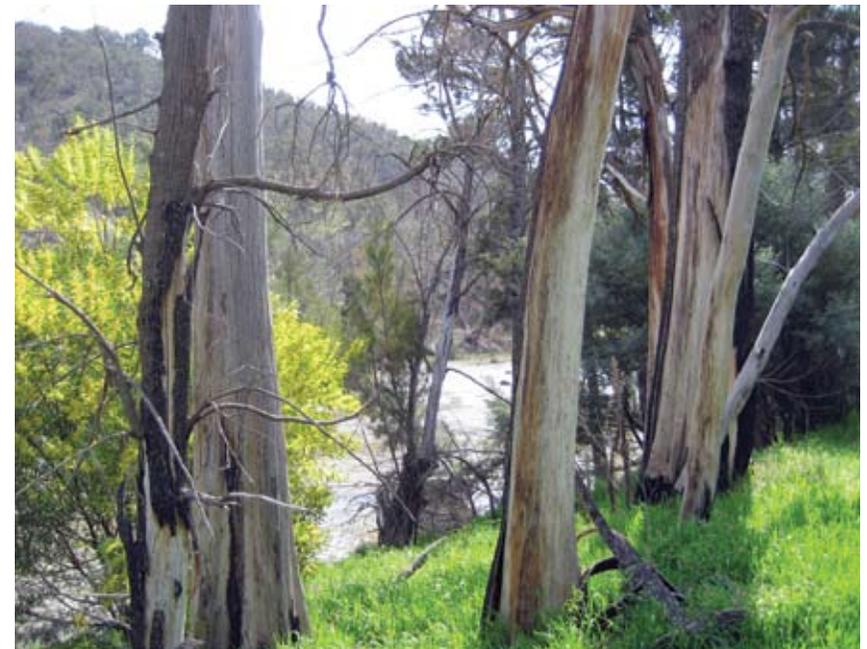
**5** Turn left through gate and walk with the fence on your right. Don't be tempted to cross the creek too early on this poorly marked section. Continue to a group of trees (dead) with a few

casuarinas (alive) ahead and cross the creek on stepping stones/clumps of grass to a sign for Lunchtime Creek; this is almost half way on the walk and a good place to stop and recharge (a grassy slope by the path just around the next bend from the crossing is a comfortable place to sit). After a rest, continue on the track cut into the hillside until you reach a climb-through gate on the left. (For another view of the river, detour to the left to Lookout Knoll.) Continue walking between fence and river. The mountain range beyond the river dominates this section of the walk and it is easy to see the devastation caused to the vegetation by the fires of 2003.

**6** Continue down a gravel slope, past a large termite mound and across a dry gully to the river. The path now runs close to the river, with lush green grasses for much of the year, wattles, casuarinas and many dead trees. The track skirts wombat holes and fallen trees and branches and is often invisible – be reassured the path is still there between the river and the rocky cliffs and it is just a matter of finding a route past obstacles until you regain the trail. The river from here to Casuarina Sands has often a large number of flat rocky shelves or rocky islands visible, some with casuarinas hanging on, unless the water level is high.

**7** The forest of dead trees gives some shade, while new growth of casuarinas and wattles abounds nearer the water. The river widens as you approach a bend in the river. Cross a large flat rocky shelf to find the path on the other side. Take care here – especially with children – as the path has been undermined by wombats, and long grasses obscure both their holes and the path. You will need to chart your own route between obstacles.

**8** Bulgar Creek is crossed here by means of an angled wooden bridge and the path traces a U-bend away from the river, followed by a sharp rise to a gate and a seat, from where falling water



### Walk variation

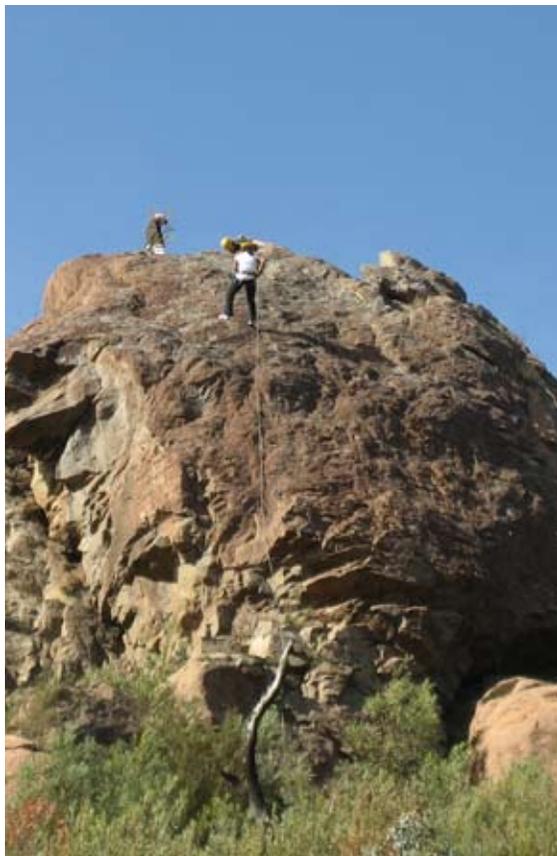
#### Kambah Pool to Lookout Rocks (Return)

This shorter walk (7 km), high above the Murrumbidgee River, with extensive views, follows a single dirt track with steep stepped paths for the majority of the way. The path is well defined with distance and arrow markers at regular intervals. Refer to waypoints 1 through 3 above. Allow 2.5 – 3 hrs for the return trip.

can sometimes be heard and/or seen. However, ants have nested beneath the seat, which makes lingering inadvisable.

**9** Winding sharply uphill near a fence the path now passes through another gate. Once more you are high above the river with the sound of the water quite loud. Continue through an area where blackened burnt stumps or trunks of trees contrast strongly with dense regeneration of plants on either side of the path. Cross a bridge and climb through a gate, back high above the river, after which the path joins a wide gravel management road. Turn left onto this road and follow it down and up a slope. Presently there is a track to the left down towards a fence and gate. Once through the gate, the path returns to the riverside, under some steep cliffs and rocks where abseilers can sometimes be seen.

**10** You are now travelling into the open space resulting from the cutting or falling of dead trees, although some planting of new trees is occurring. Veer left at the sign for Casuarina



Sands near the '1.4 km to Casuarina' marker (or if building works are still occurring, follow the detour signs on the Camp Cottermouth road to the detour car park) and continue, again rising high above the river. The Cotter Reserve can be seen in the distance with the river

and rapids below. Here the Cotter River joins the Murrumbidgee from the west.

**11** Continue past the one lane bridge leading to the Cotter Dam, past the Cotter Pumping Station to the car park at Casuarina Sands.

### Canberra environment - Casuarinas

The River Oak or Casuarina (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*) grows along the river banks in the Murrumbidgee Corridor and gives its name to Casuarina Sands. Casuarinas (also called 'She-Oaks') tolerate both wet and dry conditions and are of benefit to the river system, helping to prevent erosion. Often mistaken for pine trees because of their needle-like foliage, they attract a number of species of native birds, which feed on the casuarinas' seeds.

### Canberra history - Cotter Pumping Station

The Cotter Pumping Station is a significant landmark in the early engineering history of Canberra. The pumping station and related buildings are among the earliest permanent buildings of the new city of Canberra, having been completed in 1915. The pumping station was built to pump water from the Cotter Dam to a reservoir at Mt Stromlo, providing water for the people of Canberra. The Cotter Bridge nearby was also built in 1915, giving access to the Cotter Dam. The bridge was built high above the river to ensure access even during flooding. A new pumping station has since been built on adjacent ground and from 2007 water has been drawn from the Murrumbidgee River through this station to supplement dam storage. The amount of water drawn depends on the flow from the Murrumbidgee. The Cotter Dam is currently being enlarged.



Murrumbidgee River