

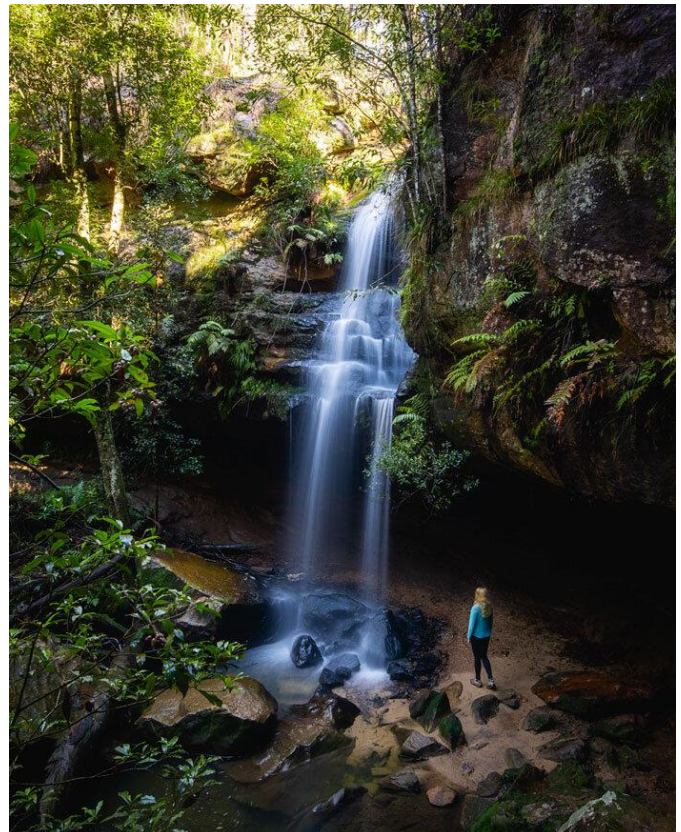


Horseshoe Falls

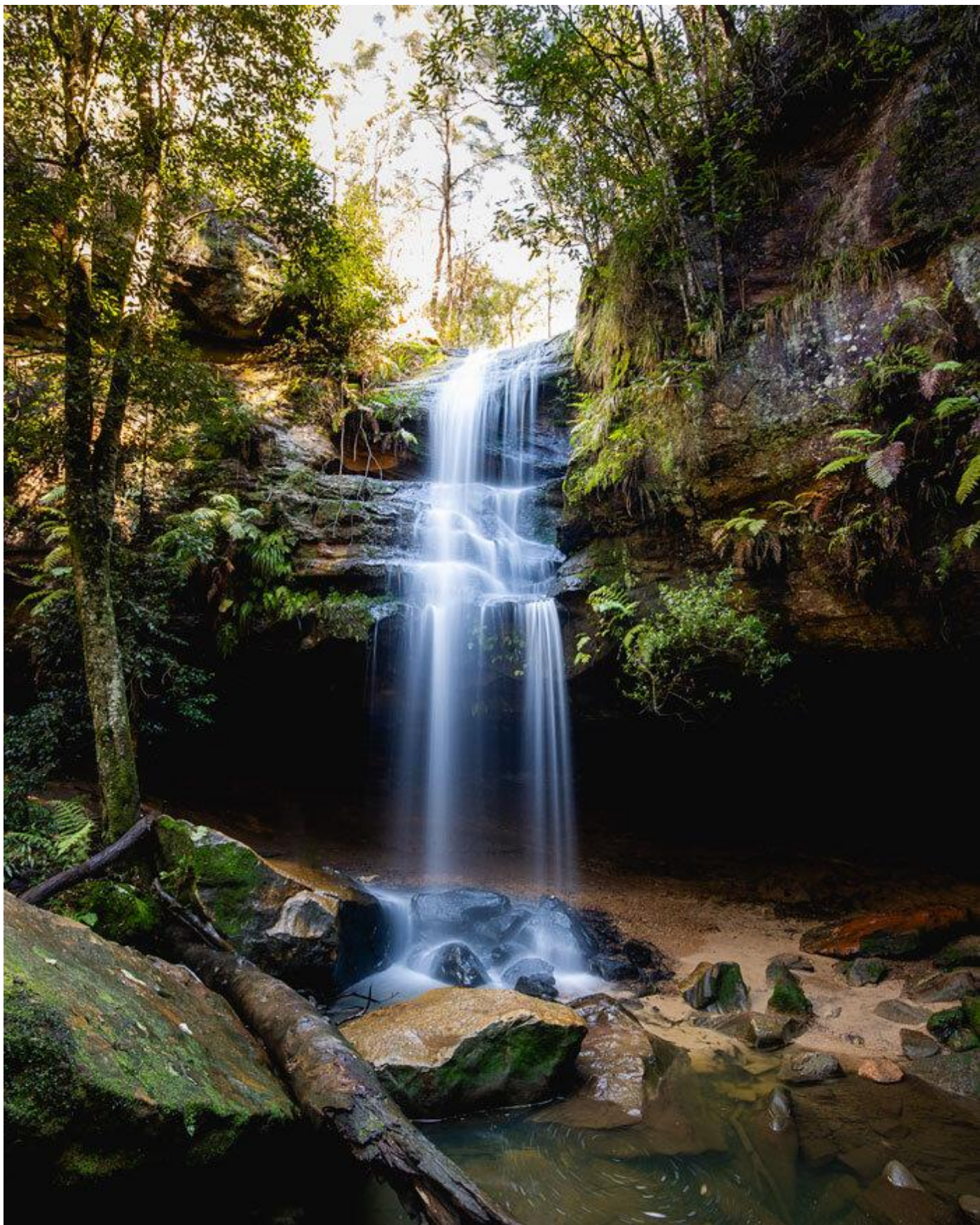
Horseshoes Falls hides a secret, and if you go after dark you are going to be in for one of the most magical experiences you can have in the mountains. Two words: glow worms.

Here's everything you need to know about Horseshoe Falls by day and by night, as well as four other falls all within a 1km walk of Horseshoe.

Horseshoe Falls is a beautiful waterfall and well worth a trip regardless of the night time spectacular. You'll want to visit after heavy rain for a really good flow, and it's a mesmerising sight as it cascades over the cliffside and into a small pool at the bottom. You can walk right behind the waterfall which is always an added bonus! It's a bit slippery and muddy behind there but nothing too hairy if you've got decent shoes on.



If you love photography, our favourite angle was climbing up the path to the left of the falls, which allows you to capture the top of the falls as well.



Now on to my favourite bit, the night time experience. After finishing up the walk to all five falls in the day time (which we'll describe later in this post), we headed over to Katoomba for sunset, and then came back to Horseshoe Falls after dark. We hadn't been expecting a huge number of glow worms and what we saw absolutely blew us away. There was probably around a thousand little glow worms twinkling right the way along the back of the cave behind the falls, as well as a few scattered along the path leading to the falls.

There were a lot more than my camera could take a photo of!

It takes a little while for your eyes to adjust and you must switch off all lights or the glow worms will just go out. Please don't shine white light on them!

Getting to the cave will require some light, but we used one very weak light and pointed it at the floor until we got there and then we turned it out.



Trust us, when you turn it out and let your eyes adjust, you are going to be in what feels like an incredible night sky that is literally in touching distance (although don't touch them!). We know 99.9% of people wouldn't dream of it, but the colony in Helensburgh was devastated by people and we'd be heart broken for it to happen here.

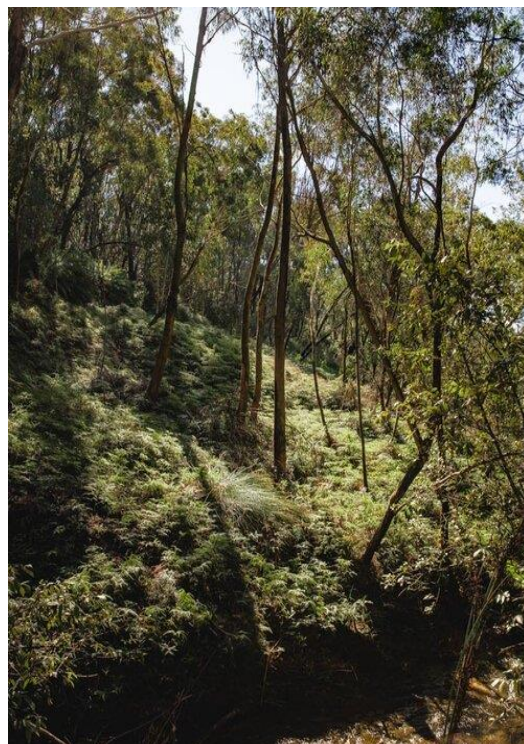
I can honestly say it is something I will never forget, we've seen glow worms before, but never on our own in such a huge quantity. It was one of those pinch yourself because it can't possibly be real moments!

The fact it was behind a waterfall also added to the feeling of awe. It was one of those places that the moment I left I was already dreaming about returning.

The walk to Horseshoe Falls

The walk to Horseshoe Falls is 700m each way (the sign says less but that's what we measured). From the car park you'll head straight into the bush and gently downhill on wide stairs.

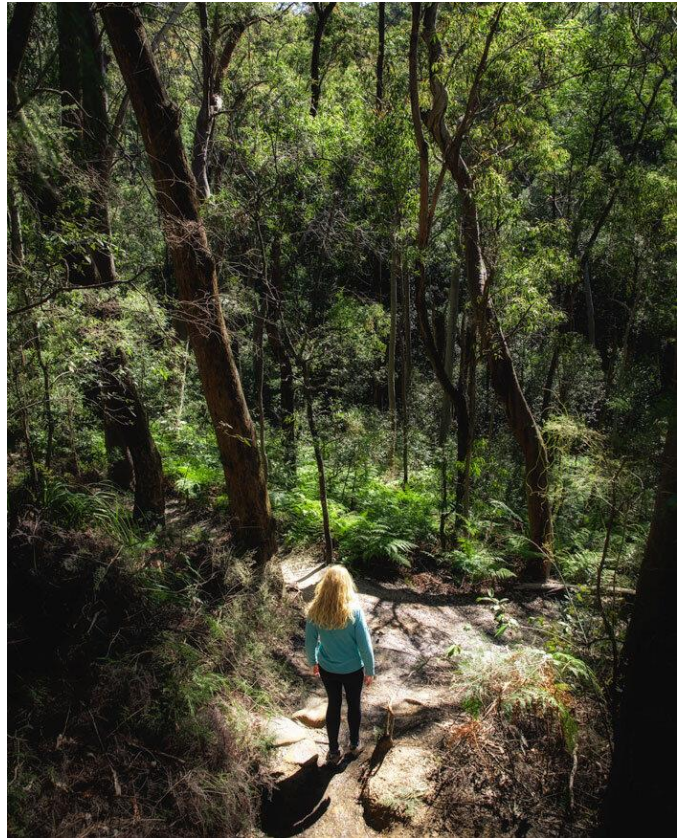
Assuming you're walking after rain, which is definitely the best time to see the falls, they will be muddy and flooded in places. It's worth it though, and you can usually skirt the wood on the edge of the steps to avoid getting water in your boots.



There is a short section of boardwalk, but for the most part it's a dirt track which is rocky in a couple of places. After 380m you'll come to a waterfall which is just a few seconds from the main track.

It's not as beautiful as Horseshoe but it's definitely worth diverting for a few minutes to check out.

We think it's called Fairy Falls, but to be honest as it isn't marked on google maps and had no sign post we're not 100% sure. Even locals referred to several of these falls by different names!



From Fairy Falls continue on the main track for another 320m and you'll arrive at Horseshoe Falls.

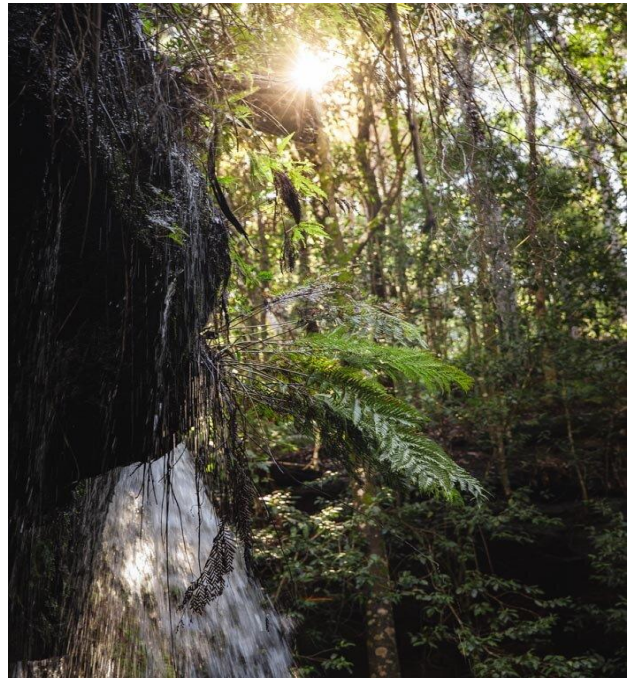
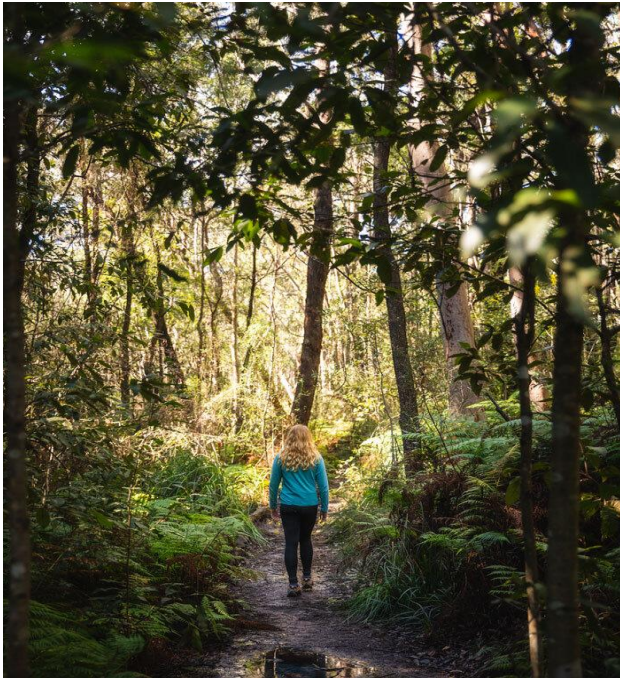
The track is in pretty good condition until the final little climb down to the falls where it's very rocky and muddy. There are a good number of trees to grab though and it only takes a few minutes to get there.



It's well worth continuing on to see the rest of the waterfalls as they are very close by. If you walk to all the waterfalls and back to your car it will total 3.4km with 120m elevation gain.

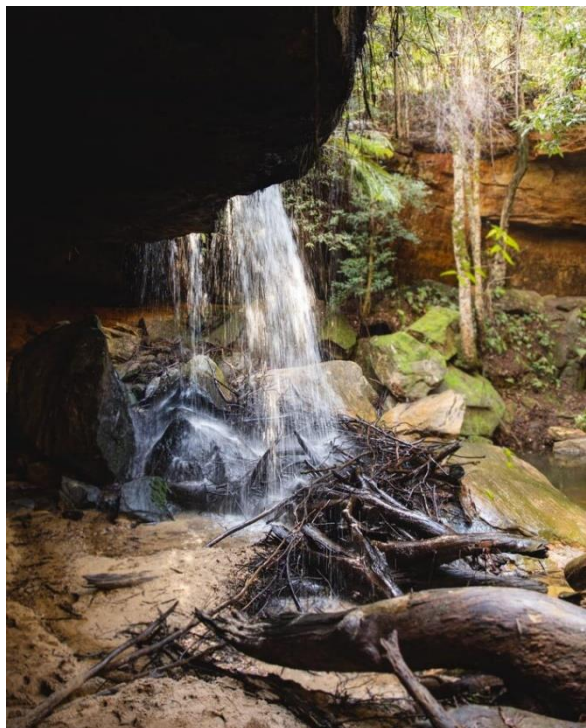
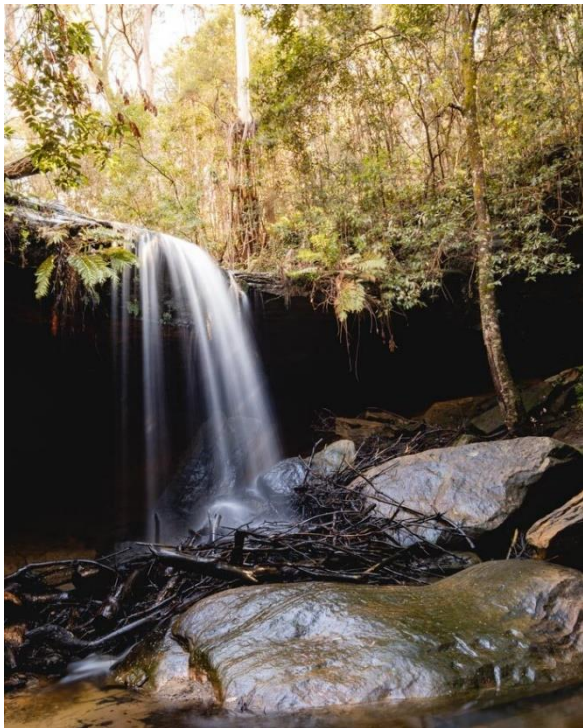
Onto Oakland Falls

From Horseshoe Falls head back onto the main trail and follow it for 450m. The path is mainly flat and much less muddy, it's also lined with lots of beautiful ferns and had a lot of birdsong as we walked through.



It's well signposted and again just requires climbing down a few rocks to get to the falls itself, which is a smaller waterfall but very lovely.

As with Horseshoe Falls you can walk behind Oakland and the setting is also gorgeous.



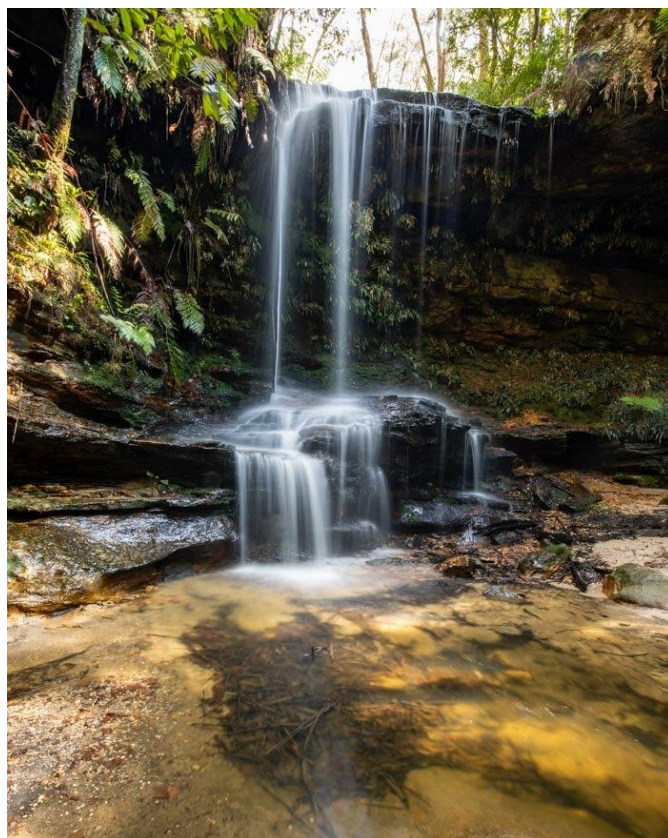
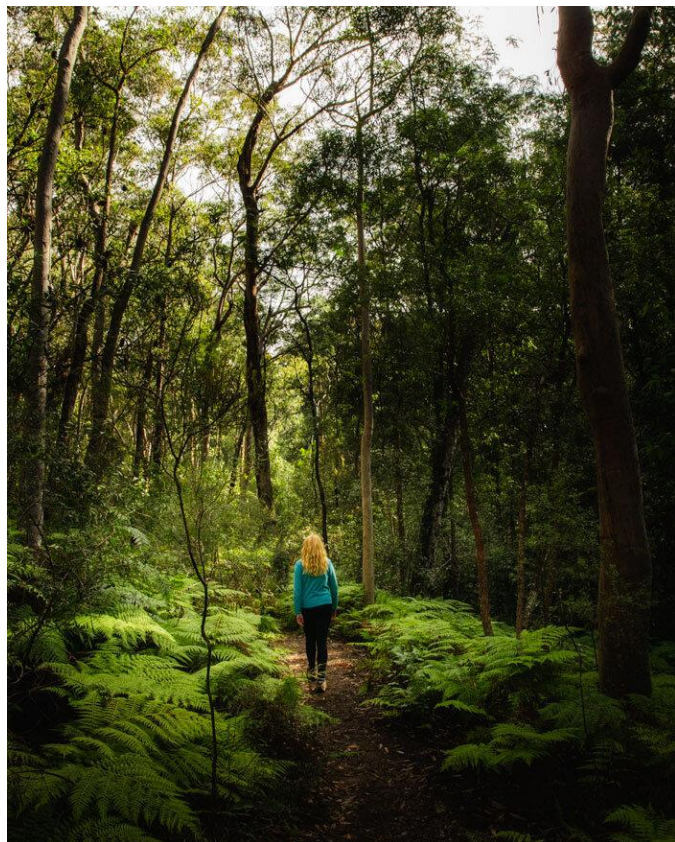
There are lots of mossy boulders and dense vegetation. Whilst we saw a couple of other people at Horseshoe, Oakland Falls were much quieter.

Onto Burgess Falls

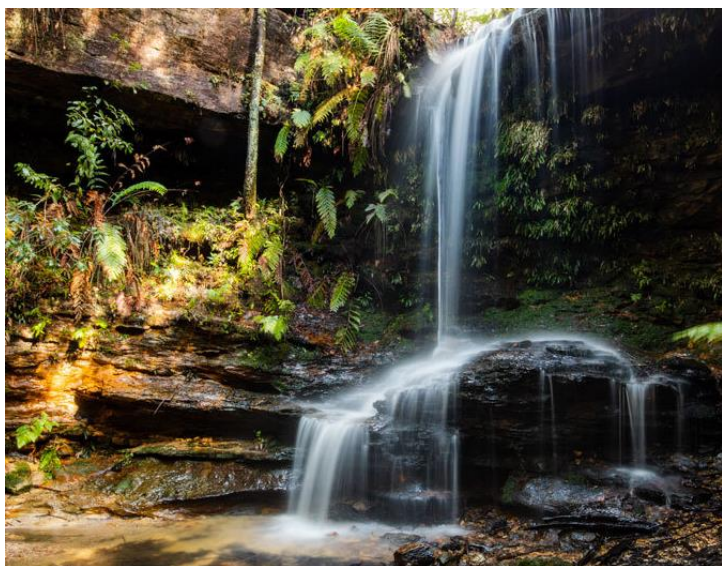
Burgess Falls is 550m beyond Oakland Falls and the path to get there is very easy.

You don't need to head onto the main path again after Oakland, as you can continue along the path directly from the falls, past the large overhang.

It's predominantly flat and another really lovely part of the forest with some giant tree ferns.



To get down to the waterfall requires a tiny scramble at the very end, it's not big by any means, but I did slide down on my bum! The waterfall itself is another really pretty one, with lots of ferns lining the cliffside. We saw a huge crayfish in the pool at the base. It was really peaceful and a lovely place to sit and relax and listen to the running water.



We spoke to a local who told us that these falls can reduce to just a trickle when it's been dry for a while, which is true of many in the mountains, and why visiting after some good rain is essential.

Onto the un-named falls

After Burgess Falls you can either retrace your steps back to your car, or you can retrace your steps as far as Horseshoe Falls and then take a different route which takes in one more waterfall. Whichever route you take it's gradually uphill for much of the way.

The friendly local we met here showed us the alternate route and the extra waterfall and we'd recommend it so you can see a bit more of the area.

From Horseshoe Falls you need to go up the staircase you can see on the far side of the falls. After the staircase the path becomes a bit more rugged so only use this route if you don't mind it being steeper and rockier.

Once you've been going uphill a little while (and around 900m on leaving Burgess Falls) you'll reach a fork in the path and you'll hear the falls. They are just a couple of minutes down the trail to the right. Whilst they are smaller than the rest we still enjoyed seeing them.

After that, go back to the main trail and take the other fork. It continues heading uphill through the forest until you come out the bush and into an open green area where there is a gate. You go past the gate and you'll see the car park (the other direction looks like it goes behind some houses).

Packing suggestions for Horseshoe Falls

Having the right gear can make a huge difference, especially in the Blue Mountains. Hazelbrook can be very hot in the summer and very cold in the winter, so you want to pack the right equipment. You will also want to additional things if you are going looking for glow worms.

Here's what we pack and have relied upon for years:

- **Sunscreen: Cancer Council Active.** With a high SPF, but not the greasy feel of other sunscreens. Makes a big difference when you're working up a sweat on a sunny day!
- **Good Rain Jacket: North Face** This is an essential item we always pack in our bag! This jacket from North Face is designed to keep you dry but also comfortably warm (many rain jackets will make you feel like you're in a sauna).
- **Head torch with red light:** If you're going on the search for glow worms, a head torch is a must. We recommend this one as it has a red light.
- **Back Pack, Hiking Boots, Trekking pole, Reusable water bottle.**

Getting to the Falls

Parking & Public Transport

There isn't a designated car park for the falls but there is space for parking just off Oakland Road in Hazelbrook. Whilst it wouldn't fit a huge amount of cars we had no trouble parking on a Saturday and I don't think it ever gets too busy.

If you don't have a car you can take the train from Sydney Central Station to Hazelbrook which takes just over an hour and a half. It's then a 1.5km walk to the start of the trailhead.

