

STINSON FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

Thank you for your interest in the hike to the site of the Stinson wreck. This trip provides a great challenge through a rugged and isolated area, and is undoubtedly one of the classic hikes in Australia.

We feel it is important to point out that most people's knowledge and expectations of this trek seldom match the reality of the experience, and feel it is our responsibility to warn you of the difficulties and dangers involved.

Terrain

This is a very arduous journey through rough rainforest terrain that involves almost constant steep climbs and descents. There's plenty of clambering around and through storm damaged areas, with fallen trees and the prickly Lawyer Vine, and regular steep rocky slopes to be negotiated that are often wet and slippery in the high rainfall zone on the crest of the border range. Even if you've done a lot of bushwalking previously in different habitats, you may find this region presents an entirely new and unexpected challenge.

The Journey

The Stinson trek is 35 kilometres in length and climbs a total of 1040 metres (3400 feet), a gain in elevation similar to the climb up Mt Barney. As the trip finishes down on Christmas Creek, the total descent is even greater at 1590 metres (5200 feet), including a long, difficult drop of 700 metres from Point Lookout to Christmas Creek.

We leave at 5.00 am by torchlight and complete the eight kilometres on graded track to Echo Point by 6.30 am. From here we follow an unmade trail over numerous peaks on the border range for the next six to seven hours until reaching Point Lookout. This is where the conditions really become testing, and it is *essential* to be able to maintain a good pace over what may seem an unending series of demanding climbs and descents. Being able to continue at that steady pace is the key; many people start well in this section, only to begin to struggle after a few hours, often becoming slower and slower as they become overcome by fatigue or soreness.

The wreck site is 20 minutes down the ridge from Point Lookout and is our lunch spot. The descent to Christmas Creek from there can be agonisingly slow if people are struggling or having knee problems. It is very steep in places and involves plenty of clambering down small rock faces and through storm damage. It shouldn't take much more than an hour but has taken three times that in the past. Once Christmas Creek is reached, all that remains is a three-kilometre walk out to the edge of the national park. This section is relatively easy, but often takes much longer than it should because of exhaustion, tender knee joints or, often enough, darkness.

Pre-requisites

Experience

Experience is essential on this type of hike. We've taken several people over the years that were relatively fit but had gained their fitness through working out at the gym or exercising on comparatively flat ground, and more often than not they've struggled. As stated previously, it is *vital* important that a good solid pace is maintained for the entire day, and only experience will allow you to move through this slippery, awkward terrain more quickly. There simply is not time for people to be constantly thinking about where to put their foot next; experience enables you to do this instinctively.

Fitness / preparation

A hike of this magnitude requires considerable preparation, it is not one that you decide to do on the spur of the moment. It takes time to build fitness levels to the standard required and to accustom yourself to the terrain and walking conditions. We recommend a preparation period of six months, ideally involving a solid weekly workout.

You must endeavour to prepare in country as similar as possible to what occurs on the Stinson trek. You should do as much rainforest work as you can, but if there is none readily available, at least prepare in steep, rugged country on rough bush tracks. Buy a bushwalking guide book ('The Bushpeople's Guide to Bushwalking in South-east Queensland' is an excellent local one) and complete some of the more difficult walks described. Time yourself and aim to be well ahead of the duration suggested; remember, these books are necessarily conservative in their timings and most wouldn't consider tackling this trek in a single day.

If you live reasonably close to Lamington National Park, try walking down and back up the Bullant Spur track to Blue Pool, which starts 250 metres towards the guesthouse from the Duck Creek Road turnoff. Aim to complete the return journey within an hour; remember, it is not just being able to manage these walks, they must be done at a good pace, and inability to do so is one of the main reasons so many people have turned back on the Stinson walk over the years.

Probably the ideal exercise in preparation would be to walk in to the wreck from the Christmas Creek end. This should be able to be completed comfortably in around five to six hours, but make an early start; the track is unclear at times, although experienced bushwalkers shouldn't have too much trouble following it.

Trouble-free knee joints

If you have knees that give you trouble then DO NOT take on this walk. Painful knee joints have been the downfall of so many otherwise competent walkers on so many Stinson walks over the years. Besides the pain you may cause yourself, which is often excruciating by the time the sufferers have struggled out to the bus, usually in darkness, it is unfair on the other participants that have often been forced to stroll along at a snail's pace for the last few hours of the trip while waiting for one or two people, causing the walk to run several hours late. Also, attempting such a hike with faulty knees may cause them irreparable damage and can affect your future enjoyment of bushwalking in general.

Requirements

We insist that all participants must be on site at O'Reilly's the evening before the hike for a face-to-face meeting with the guide. This involves a final briefing and will also allow the guide a basic verbal assessment of the preparation of the participants; it is the guide that has the final say as to who may participate in the walk.

Hikers are required to bring:

- a small torch with fresh batteries
- drinking water – there are no creek crossings before Christmas Creek. At least three litres is recommended
- energy-rich snack food
- comfortable backpack
- comfortable, sturdy hiking boots that have been well worn in.
- rain jacket and warm coat.

This is not a hike for anyone that's just getting into rugged bushwalking (or who's been doing it too long!). Neither is it for someone who's simply out to prove to themselves that they can handle the challenge; that only puts themselves and others at risk. But it can be an enjoyable and very rewarding day for anyone that is properly prepared.

Kind Regards



Tim O'Reilly