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Conservation and Attractions

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Remember

Be careful: Your enjoyment and safety in natural environments is our concern but your responsibility.

Many roads are not suitable for driving after rains. Check with the ranger if in doubt.

Carry drinking water.

Be clean: Put your litter in bins, or better still take it with you.

Stay cool: Don't light fires.

Protect animals and plants: No firearms or pets please.

Be courteous: Several homesteads and ruins are privately owned. Please respect owners' privacy.

Be aware: Persons using this Heritage Trail do so at their own risk.

For further information

This Heritage Trail is one of nine trails in the South Coast Network and further information is available from:

Department of Conservation and Land Management
South Coast Region
44 Serpentine Road
ALBANY
(098) 41 7133

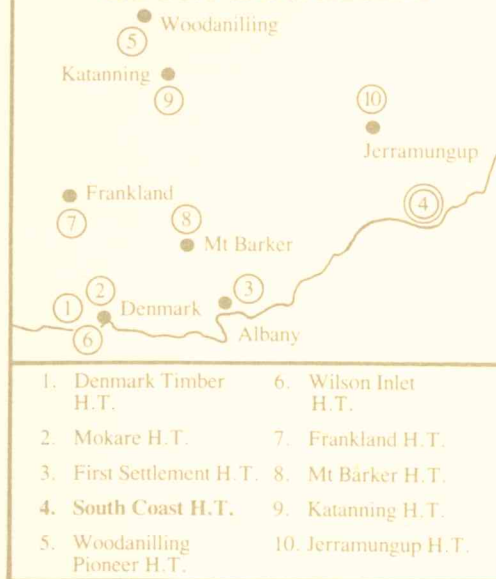
CALM Esperance District Office
Wallace Way Centre
Dempster Street
ESPERANCE
(090) 71 3733

W. A. Heritage Trails Committee (09) 322 4375



Department of Conservation and Land Management
P.O. Box 104, COMO WA 6152
Phone: (09) 367 0333

Heritage Trails in the Great Southern

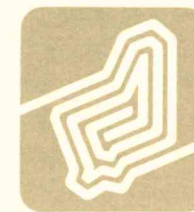


W.A. Heritage Trails Network A Bicentennial Project for Community Participation

The South Coast Heritage Trails are part of the Heritage Trails Network, a project for community participation devised by the Western Australian Heritage Committee. To commemorate the 1988 Bicentenary, the project established a statewide network of Heritage Trails - routes designed to enhance awareness and enjoyment of Western Australia's natural and cultural heritage.

The Heritage Trails Network was jointly funded by the Commonwealth/State Bicentennial Commemorative Program.

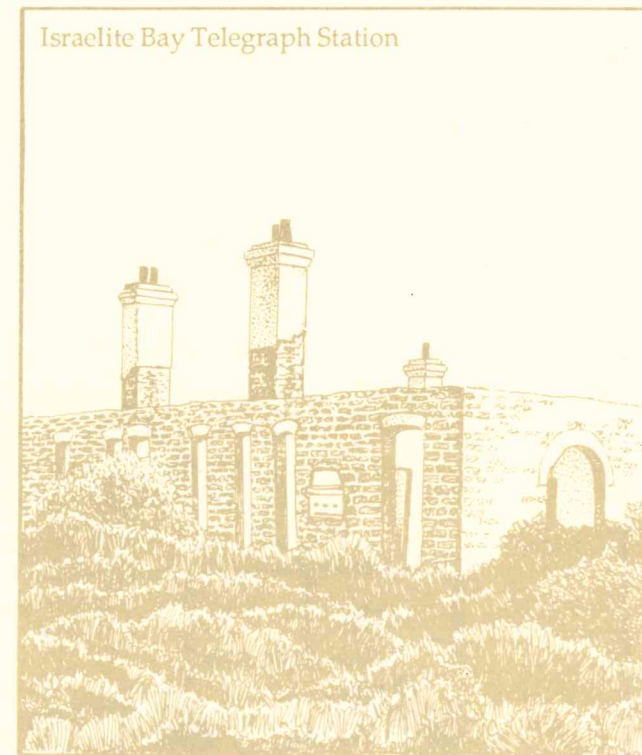
Cape Arid Heritage Trail is one of the South Coast Heritage Trails. A guidebook with detailed information on the natural history and heritage of the South Coast is available from the Department of Conservation and Land Management and the Heritage Trails Committee.



Cape Arid Heritage Trail

CAPE ARID NATIONAL PARK

Israelite Bay Telegraph Station



SOUTH COAST NETWORK

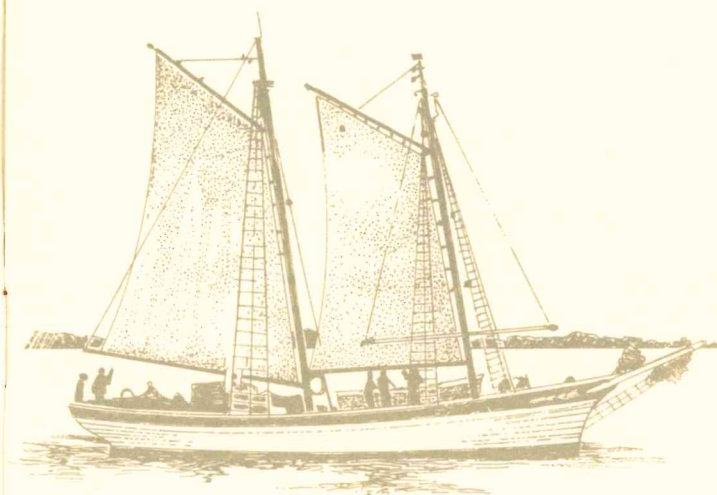
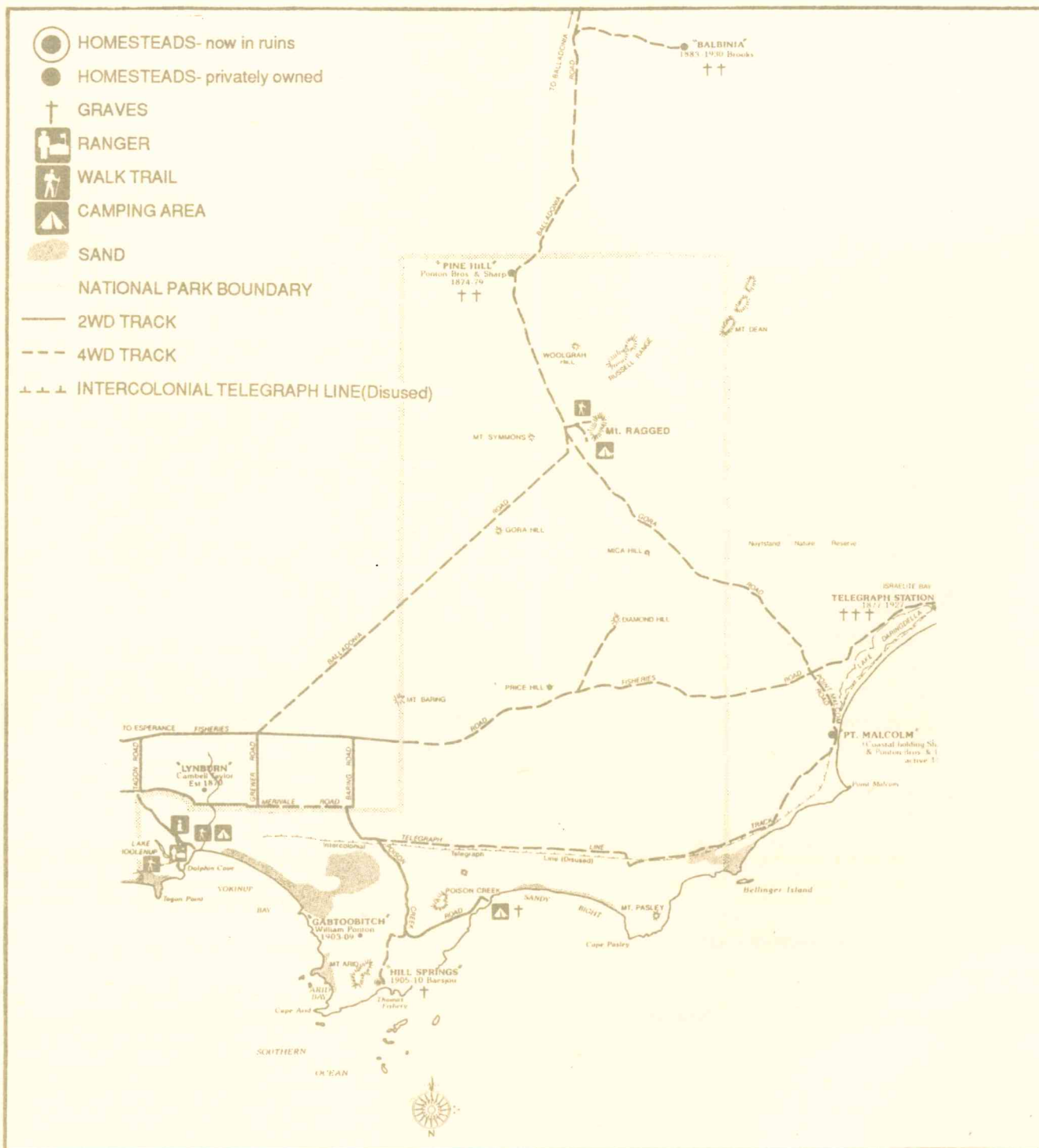


A Commonwealth/State
Bicentennial Project

Discover Cape Arid, past and present.

In the 1870s this coastline was Western Australia's frontier land. Cheap land and reports of 'beautiful grassy plains' to the east were incentives to many who came. The building of the Intercolonial Telegraph line brought others.

Cape Arid Heritage Trail is your guide to the European history of this area. Like the explorers' reports that guided settlers over 100 years ago, it provides only an indication of what you might discover on your own.



"Agnes", a south coast trader

A visitor's book



Sketch of Mt Ragged
from the field book of
Surveyor Price, 1876.

The visitors of yesterday came here for many different reasons and left with varying perceptions:
JAMES MANNING, sealer, June 1835 - En route from Cape Arid to Albany:

"[we] subsisted chiefly on limpets and on roots of grass..."

EDWARD JOHN EYRE, explorer, May 16th 1841 - near Israelite Bay:

"It was an effort to put one foot before the other and there was an indisposition to exertion that was difficult to overcome...I could have sat quietly and contentedly and let the last glass of life glide away to its last sand".

And three days later, near Pt Malcolm:

"In places we found low brush, in others handsome clumps of teatree scattered at intervals over some grassy tracts of country giving a pleasing park-like appearance we had long been strangers to."

JOHN SEPTIMUS ROE, surveyor and explorer, 22 Nov 1848 - Mt Ragged:

"...travelling now became difficult in the extreme. To avoid sapling thickets, 12 to 15 feet high, so densely packed that axes only could have opened a passage, we were compelled to take a more circuitous route...feeling that one false move in our critical situation would compromise the safety of the whole party. The last of the small quantity of water was shared out for breakfast...and the party was moving on to ascertain the worst..."

And a few days later:

"...no sight could have been more welcome to us at the moment than this beautiful run of pure fresh water cascading down from the highest part of the range...not the least sign of a grassy tract of country appeared in any direction."

C. EDWARDS AND DEMPSTER BROS, prospective settlers, 9 July 1863 - Pt Malcolm to Mt Ragged:

"Started for Mt Ragged; passed through scrubby plains; surprised at discovering the tracks of two horses going towards and returning to Pt Malcolm."

JOHN FORREST, surveyor and explorer, 15 May 1870 - Thomas River:

"Shifted camp over to the Thomas River...where there was plenty of water. Rained a little during the day. Grassy piece of country round camp - the first good feeding land since leaving Mount Merivale."

And a few days later at Israelite Bay:

"Procured abundance of water by digging one foot deep in the sandhills..."

AMY CROCKER, long-time resident at Hill Springs-Balladonia, 14 Oct 1987 - Mt Arid:

"What a glorious view. Sea, islands, horseshoe bays and always the lovely clear blue of the ocean gives way to a rim of transparent veridian where the white sand borders the sea."

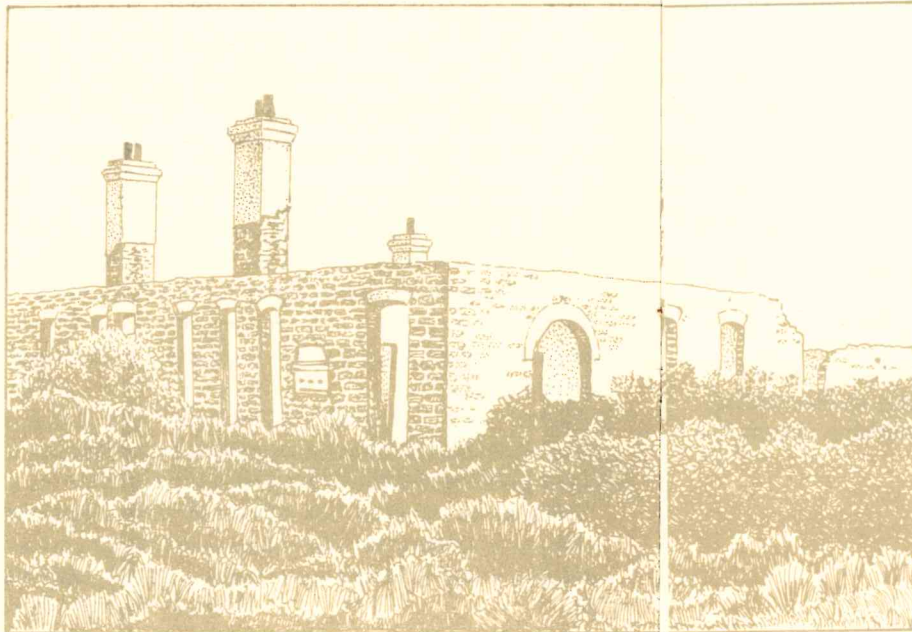
The lure of land

In 1874 Sarah Brooks, a young lady of 24, walked 650 km from Albany to Thomas River with her brother John Paul and their mother.

She wrote: "...very liberal land Acts in Western Australia...stated that settlers would receive a free lease of 100 000 acres for five years...We were warned that the country was poor and patchy but we thought no matter how poor, 100 000 acres would surely carry 3 000 sheep and that would give us a start."

When her shoes wore out she used chaff bags. It was a far cry from her genteel life in Melbourne.

Favourable reports of the land by Surveyor John Forrest in 1870 no doubt also caused the Brooks and others to head east. After exploring from Perth to Adelaide, he said the country inland from Eyre to Eucla 'as a grazing country far surpass(es) anything I have ever seen...but absence of water is a great drawback.'



Water was a problem, and after a near disastrous trip to Eucla, Sarah's brother John Paul settled near Pt Malcolm where water was had for the digging. Here, John Paul worked as a linesman on the telegraph between 1877-84 before the family moved inland in 1887 to 'Balbinia', just north of present-day Cape Arid National Park.

Sarah, a talented linguist, musician and painter, spent most of her life here, and some idea of the loneliness and hardship can be gauged by visiting the ruins of 'Balbinia' or from John Paul's thoughts on the summit of Mt Ragged in 1894:

'...to the wearied and perspiring pioneer who has arduously toiled on hands and feet to attain the summit of Mt Ragged - anticipating a view of broad, rolling plains of bright, waving yellow grass, studded with clumps and ridges of the brilliant dark green of (so called) sandalwood, or the bluish white of salt bush plains - the endless panorama which meets his gaze is a cruel disappointment, so dreary, cheerless and solitary is the dark funeral hue of the immense undulating sea of Eucalyptus and Melaleuca

melting away in the distance to a smokey blue on the one hand, and the desolate grey of the vast quocken (sandplain) bounded by the coast line on the other, the survey produces a feeling of horror and loathing. Yet when impartially viewed this scene is neither devoid of interest nor of beauty...'

ACCESS to Balbinia: 125 km 4WD track (unnamed) off Balladonia Track. The graves of John Paul and Theresa Brooks can be seen near the homestead.

Mt Ragged gold rush

A prominent landmark, Mt Ragged was and is climbed by many, even, at one time, by gold seekers. After travelling kilometres on bicycle, foot and horse, their only reward was the view; there was no gold here.

In the 1890s the Goldfields were a market for horses, sheep and cattle for the Ponton brothers and John Sharp, then at Balladonia. They were often paid in gold for their livestock. Itinerant workers on the station, many of whom were headed for the Goldfields, were sometimes paid in this same gold, and any gold aroused interest.

A glance at the rocks of Balladonia showed they held no gold, so eyes were cast to Mount Ragged, near where the pioneers had once lived. The rush was on, and attempts to stop the seekers by the pioneers, who knew how hard the country was on newcomers, only acted as encouragement.

ACCESS: Mt Ragged 78 km, off Balladonia Track. A steep and rocky walk to the summit of Mt Ragged will give panoramic views. Allow 2 hours for the climb. A sheltered picnic and camping area is at the western end of the mountain. Springs in the vicinity are no longer reliable so carry all drinking water.



This prospector dashed from Coolgardie to Mt Ragged, near Israelite Bay, in 1895, following the rumour of a gold find in the area. He was one of several bush cyclists who made the trip

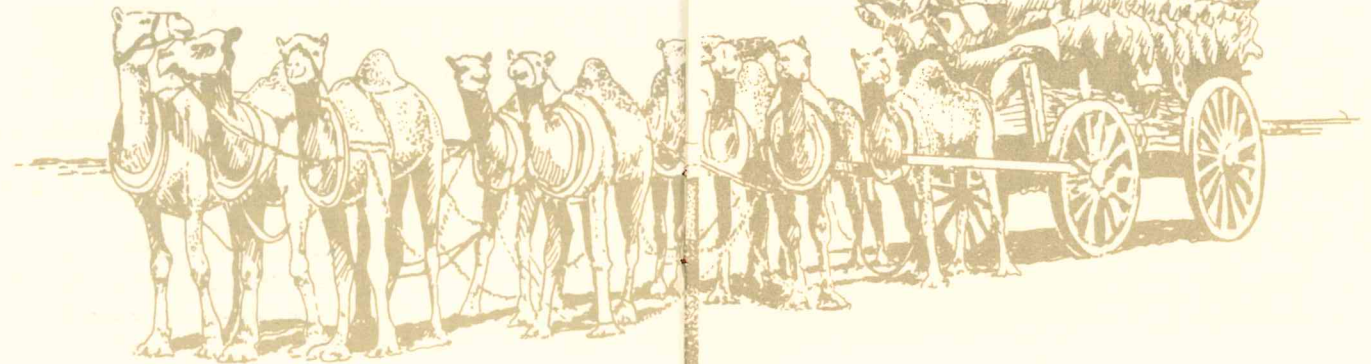
A life line

In 1875 it often took a year for a letter to travel between Western Australia (then a British Colony) and London. With the completion in 1877 of the Intercolonial Telegraph Line (Albany to Adelaide), which joined the overland line (Adelaide to Darwin), Western Australia was in daily contact with the world.

Construction of the line through this remote and inhospitable country was a remarkable achievement.

Morse code messages had to be boosted several times over this great distance, and Israelite Bay Station was one of seven W.A. stations. Linesmen patrolled the single wire on camels, horses, or bicycles. They fixed breaks caused by fires, storms, sand or thirsty travellers who had broken the line, knowing a linesman would soon arrive.

With the completion of a modern telegraph line along the Transcontinental Railway in 1927, the coastal line was abandoned and today the once stately station is in ruins; it is vested with the National Trust. Several graves can be seen in the vicinity and salt lakes nearby provide an interesting change in scenery.
ACCESS to Israelite Bay Telegraph Station: 114 km, 4WD track, along Fisheries Road.



Pine Hill

Known to the local Aborigines as 'Gauroojeninya,' this area was discovered in 1874 by the pioneers William and Stephen Ponton and John Sharp. They named it after the native pines (*Callitris sp.*) which, as termite-resistant wood, later became highly prized for fence posts.

They had driven sheep overland from Albany in 1873 and for the next five years ran sheep at Pine Hill - moving them to Pt Malcolm (along what is now Gora Track) as water ran out.

They learned of superior country further north from the Aborigines and in 1879 they located 'Barlajurnya', or 'the big red rock by itself', known today as Balladonia. A descendant of the Ponton family still runs the station. All that remains at Pine Hill are ruins of an oven and travellers' graves.

ACCESS to Balladonia: 95 km, 4WD track, off Balladonia Road.

Gabtoobitch and Hill Springs

Not content with an easy life, William Ponton moved south in 1903 after Stephen's death, and established 'Gabtoobitch' on the west side of Mt Arid. On the east side his niece and her family established Hill Springs. Today, only the homestead's stone chimneys still stand. A pamphlet available on site written and illustrated by Amy Crocker, who spent her childhood here, provides a vivid picture of life at the turn of the century.

ACCESS: 65 km via Poison Creek Rd, 4WD off Thomas Fishery Road. Allow at least 30 minutes for the walk to the ruins, William Ponton's grave and the lookout.

The annual shop

Imagine having to shop for a year's supply of goods!

Once a year ships called into Pt Malcolm to collect the annual wool clip, animal skins and sandalwood. Pioneers received their supplies, and placed an order for the next year. With no corner stores they had to make do if they forgot anything.

The Pt Malcolm area was a convenient spot for ships to call at, and permanent water in the dunes provided a valuable refuge for stock. During the goldrush of the 1890s the Pontons and John Sharp used Pt Malcolm as a base to capitalise on the needs of gold seekers to the north.

Whales

In the 1870s a Bay Whaling Station was established at Thomas Fishery. The station consisted of a large fireplace, with a giant iron trypot in which blubber was boiled down, and some shacks. Nothing remains today, but you may see some right whales along the coast.

The prime target of bay whalers, right whales were so named because they were the 'right' whales to hunt. They were slow, came close to shore so rowboats launched from the beach could give chase, and yielded much oil and baleen.

With protection, numbers of right whales are rising, and sightings are increasing as the whales come close to shore to give birth and nurse their young.

ACCESS to whale sighting spots:

Tagon Bay and surrounding waters are good whale sighting spots in wintertime, and the coastal walktrail from Thomas River to Tagon Bay provides excellent vantage points, where you might also see dolphins, seabirds and rock-basking lizards. Allow 4 hours return for this moderate trail. For an alternative route follow Tagon Track back. Please keep to the trail and take care on wet rocks.

