



Australian Government
Director of National Parks

Tourism Australia

Greater Blue Mountains

Wild freedom on Sydney's doorstep.

Ten times older than the Grand Canyon and with a human history dating back 22,000 years, the Greater Blue Mountains contain over 1,500 species of plants and animals across an exceptional range of habitats — shimmering mountains, cathedral caves, deep gorges and valleys of water cascading into remnant, pre-historic rainforests.

The Greater Blue Mountains comprise a World Heritage site, eight national parks and protected areas, four internationally significant wetlands and contain rich cultural traditions of six Aboriginal groups — the Darug, Darkinjung, Dharawal, Gundungurra, Wanaruah and Wirajuri.

BLUE MOUNTAINS LANDSCAPES

The Greater Blue Mountains takes its name from the blue shimmer which is said to rise into the air as the oil from the eucalyptus trees evaporates. Nowhere else on earth is there such a diverse range of eucalypt species, within such a small geographical space, specially adapted to survive across a landscape. This diversity played a major role in the declaration of the area as a World Heritage site.

The region is one of the three most diverse areas on earth for scleromorphic (hard-leaved) plants. Over 1,000 different species of plants have been recorded in the Greater Blue Mountains area including 127 rare or threatened species, and a further 114 species that are found nowhere else on earth.

Connecting to our ancient past

The majestic Wollemi pine, which can grow up to 40

metres high, is a reminder of our ancient past. The tree is a remnant from a 200 million year-old landscape, when Australia, New Zealand and Antarctica were still joined together as the supercontinent Gondwana.

Thought to have been extinct for millions of years, the Wollemi Pine was rediscovered by a bushwalker in 1994. Fewer than 100 trees exist in the wild, growing in the deep rainforest gorges of the Greater Blue Mountains.

The Blue Mountain Botanic Gardens, Mount Tomah — a World Heritage experience

The 28-hectare Blue Mountain Botanic Gardens at Mount Tomah contain a world-class display of cold-climate plants. A newly opened World Heritage exhibition centre provides the opportunity to understand remote inaccessible areas of the landscape and discover their world heritage values.

A VAST ANIMAL KINGDOM

Over 400 animal species can be found across the landscape, including Australian icons such as the kangaroo, koala, platypus and echidna. Another 40 rare or threatened species can also be found like the spotted-tail quoll.

SPOTTED-TAILED QUOLL

The spotted-tailed quoll is the largest native carnivore left on mainland Australia. It lives in forest, woodland and dense coastal heathland. The quoll's distribution has decreased markedly since European settlement and it is now uncommon. Considerably larger than other quolls, the spotted-tailed quoll has unmistakable colouring — red-brown with bold white spots along the entire body and tail.

It is largely nocturnal and eats small to medium-sized mammals and birds, such as possums and rosellas, and also large insects, spiders and scorpions. It forages in trees and on rock faces as well as on the ground. The quoll's decline is mainly due to habitat loss and introduced predators such as foxes and cats.

HELP PROTECT YOUR WORLD'S HERITAGE

Biodiversity is life — conserving our natural world means clean water, clean air and fertile soil for us all. The Blue Mountains form one of Australia's most important water catchments — so tread carefully to keep our water clean.

You can make your own contribution to conserving our natural world when you visit the Blue Mountains. Low-impact activities such as bushwalking, cycling and canoeing all provide fantastic opportunities to get off the beaten track and discover new worlds that are like nothing else on earth.

Responsible tourism aims to allow visitors to explore our natural landscapes and learn about the plants, animals, climate and geology that make them unique. Encouraging low-impact activities will help to ensure the protection of these habitats into the future.

- Tread lightly on your World Heritage! Help reduce the possibility of introducing weeds into Wollemi pine habitat by cleaning your walking boots before hiking through the wilderness.

Enhance your experience and contribute to conservation by:

- Volunteering with Earthwatch Australia and the University of Newcastle to monitor frogs in the Greater Blue Mountains area. Help scientists find out why some species are declining and some are flourishing. For more information go to: www.earthwatch.org/australia
- Taking part in a range of biodiversity surveys and regeneration programs with New South Wales National Parks. For more information go to: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/volunteers
- Getting involved in the Blue Mountains Conservation Society conservation program by making a donation or taking part in their Weeds or Walks program. For more information go to: www.bluemountains.org.au

GLOW WORMS

Glow worms, which are the larval stage of a species of fly, emit phosphorescent light in the dark environment. The worms create the light through a series of chemical reactions. Suspended from cave roofs, glow worms spin silken threads like fishing lines to catch mosquitoes and other insects. Some theories suggest that colonies of glow worms create a false night sky, designed to confuse and lure in their prey.

You can see glow worms in an ecological niche created by an old train tunnel in the Wollemi National Park. The worms are highly sensitive to disturbance so please don't touch them, and make sure you shine your torch light on the floor of the tunnel or their glow will disappear.



Spotted-tail quoll



Jaime Plaza, Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust

For more information on this landscape or to learn about other naturally beautiful places which offer a different but uniquely Australian experience. Visit www.australia.com/nl