

The Bibbulmun Track is one of Australia's best long-distance hiking tracks, and my personal favourite. If you experience the Bibbulmun for yourself, then you will understand why. Winding its way for 1003kms through WA's diverse land of bush and coastline, it has 9 sections with towns along the way, where you can refuel before hitting the track again. The trailheads are at Kalamunda (northern end) and Albany (southern end) with the majority of people starting their journey from Kalamunda in the springtime, following the wildflower season down to the south.

I've hiked sections of this track over many years. In autumn 2017, I hiked end-to-end starting from Albany and finishing in my childhood hometown of Kalamunda. On this trip, I raised funds for the Bibbulmun Track Foundation and filmed a documentary about the track at the same time.

Here's a rundown of my experiences on the track, and my advice to anyone who is planning this journey for themselves.



Hiking the Bibbulmun end-to-end is a long but worthwhile experience.

History of the track

The track came about to encourage more people to venture into the bush back in the early 1970s. By 1979, it was officially opened as a long-distance trail, though it was only 650kms. As the years have moved along, so has the track with help from the Foundation and more than 380 volunteers who care and maintain the track to an extremely high standard. In 1994, the track saw a massive upgrade with the installation of shelters, rain-water tanks and drop toilets placed at campsites dotting a day's walk from each other. This was inspired by the famous Appalachian Trail in the US.



Over the past few decades, the track has received some upgrades to make it easier for hikers to attempt.

How the Bibbulmun got its name

The Bibbulmun name comes from the local indigenous tribe of the area known to travel long distances through the bush for ceremonial gatherings.

The signs you follow are known as the Waugal (serpent) meaning soul, or spirit or breath.

These bright fluorescent yellow triangles are nailed to the trees for easy spotting.

Although the track is fully signed, it is recommended to carry an up-to-date map and guidebook. If you are interested in learning more about the history of the track go to the foundation site [here](#).



These are the trail markers you should be following along the way.

Distance options

There are various ways in which to experience the track and many hikers go on day-walks, overnights or even longer sections as there are some great access points along the way

where you can hop on and off the track.

One hiker I met was from Melbourne, and he loved being able to come over and spend a week or two on the track, and then come back another time to complete another section.

The Bibbulmun can be a day trip or a multi-day hike depending on what you want to do.

When to hike

Best time to hike the Bibbulmun track is between April and October. Summer is not recommended as Western Australia has extremely hot dry summers, making it a high-risk fire season. There's a chance of no water, with many days the temperatures up in the high 30's, and some days reaching 40°C and beyond.

Over the years, many a shelter has sadly become the victim to fire. Just this summer there was a fire that swept through the northern section of the track resulting in the loss of such shelter. A hiker also had to be rescued by helicopter literally minutes before it burnt down!

April to October is the best time of the year to experience this walk.

Duration of the track

Nowadays, the track is 1003km long and is predominantly out in the bushland. Though you do get 9 towns as points of contact where you will enter back into civilisation. This provides the opportunity to shower and wash your clothes, re-stock your supplies, have a cold beer and sleep in a real bed.

The average time a hiker would take on the track is around 6-8 weeks or 45-60 days. I took 54 days and would have loved more. Some people like the challenge of being the fastest, like one woman completing her journey in 15 days!

There is estimated to be over 100 hikers each year completing this track and becoming an end-to-ender. This is by either hiking it in one go or completing sections over a period.

There are lots of international hikers as well as Aussies on the track which is fantastic to see. When embarking on a journey like this, it's extremely important to plan your adventure well before heading out there and tailor your trip to suit you.

This is a long hike that can take between 6 to 8 weeks to finish.

Preparation

The first thing to do before attempting this hike is to research and find out all you need to know about it. This is a wilderness track and one can expect to be anywhere between 10 - 15 days at a time between towns.

In some areas, there is no phone coverage, so it can be quite isolating out there. You do meet other hikers most days and share a campsite with them but there are times that doesn't happen. This means that you need to be self-sufficient.

Self-sufficiency is essential, even though you will meet other people along the way.

Where to start your research

Where do you begin? Start at the Bibbulmun Track Foundation website [here](#). This is set up for hikers heading out on the track. They have all the information you need including support to help get you ready for the journey ahead.

They also offer different workshops on everything Bibbulmun. Check out online groups, they are often run by hikers who frequent the track.

Training for the track

My other advice is [to train!](#) Get hiking fit! It's so much more enjoyable and less chance of injury if you are fit and ready for your adventure.



It's important to be 'hiking fit' before attempting a long walk such as this.

Shelters and campsites

There are 49 shelters and campsites in total along the way which are free to stay at. Each shelter is a 3-sided, either wooden or rammed earth structure, with sleeping platforms, a picnic table, tent sites and a drop toilet.

Most of the campsites in the northern section have fire pits but the southern section doesn't due to restrictions.

There is a register book and a logbook for the hikers on the track. It is important to sign in so emergency services know who is on the track at any given time, also its a guide to how many people are using the track.



There are several shelters and campsites provided along the way.

Navigation

There are 8 [guidebooks](#) and [maps](#) for this track broken down into sections which you can check out [here](#). It is extremely well marked though it's advisable to carry the ones you need. You can purchase them online through the Bibbulmun Foundation or in various hiking stores. Learn how to read a map and [compass](#) - don't just put it in your pack. It's a wilderness track and is important that you are responsible for your own safety.

Food drops and resupply

Let's face it you can't carry 2 months worth of food, so you need to organise food drops. This can be done by pre-planning your meals and supplies to coordinate with the 9 towns you pass through.

You can post them ahead of time to either the post office of the town or the accommodation you plan to book with. Some people will do a drive down with their boxes, but Australia post works pretty well in my opinion.



Supplying yourself with food for the trip is something you need to work out in advance.

Food

I cooked and dehydrated most of my meals but there are great choices on the market for hikers like the [Back-Country Cuisine](#) range. I do love their [Cinnamon Rice Pudding!](#) Be sure you pack enough nutrient-rich foods as your body will be using a lot of fuel and will need to replenish.

I also added into my supplies [Sports Nutrition Endurance Powder](#) just for that little bit more. You'll find by week 3 that you'll be super hungry.

Dehydrating your food is a great alternative to pre-made freeze-dried meals. You can also [vacuum seal](#) it for freshness.

Gear you may need

My advice to you is to be sure all your gear is tried out prior to starting. This is because there are only a few locations on the track to get new gear. These stores are in small country towns, so they only carry basic equipment.

Here is an idea of what I carried on my end-to-end trek.

My packing list

I packed all my [food](#) and other supplies into my 70L Rucksack (Osprey Xena). Here are all of the other essentials that I took on my trip:

My sleeping quarters for the trip - the [Sea to Summit Specialist Duo](#).

Sleeping gear and shelter

- Tent ([Sea to Summit Specialist Duo](#))
- Sleeping bag and silk liner ([Sea to Summit Spark SP3 bag](#) and [Aeros Pillow](#))
- Sleeping mat ([Sea to Summit Comfort Light Insulator](#), best mat ever)

Appliances and tools

- Battery charger (20000mAh), iPhone
- [Head torch](#)
- [Pocket knife](#)

A reliable cooking system is an essential piece of gear for the track.

Cooking gear

- Stove and gas cylinder ([JetBoil MiniMo](#))
- Waterproof matches and lighter
- [Coffee press](#) (for the JetBoil, it's the best investment)
- Pot and [cup](#)
- [Knife/fork/spoon](#) (titanium Sea to Summit cutlery set)

Hydration

- Hydration system – 3-litre capacity
- [LifeStraw](#)
- [Katadyn Micropur Forte Tablets](#) (recommended to treat all water)



Here's a snapshot of all my gear laid out beside my pack.

Safety and navigation

- Maps and compass
- [Suunto Traverse watch](#)
- [Disposable hand warmers](#) (for those extra cool nights)
- PLB ([ACR ResQlink](#))
- [First aid kit](#)
- [Snakebite kit](#)



It's extremely important to bring a map – and learn how to read it!

Comfort gear

- Sit-a-pon (waterproof mat to sit on)
- One change of clothes and socks (put in a compression bag to save room)
- [Gaiters](#)
- [Hiking poles](#)
- Insect repellent ([Bushmans](#) works best for the march flies)
- Head buff
- [Mosquito Headnet](#)

- Wet weather gear
- Warm windproof jacket
- Crocs (sandals for camp)
- Beanie and sun hat
- Sarong (my multipurpose best item)
- Toiletries (including Lavender oil – put a drop in some warm water at camp for bathing)

Getting to the track

For those hikers flying in, there is a regular 30-minute bus ride from the airport to Kalamunda. The buses leave twice every hour, so look for bus 296 and 299. If coming in from the city, its approximately a 1hr ride from the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre leaving every 10 – 15 mins.

The buses you can take are the 282, 283, 296, 299. If you need more up to date information, check out Perth's transport website [here](#).



There are a few ways you can go about getting to the Bibbulmun track.

Accommodation

In terms of accommodation, in Kalamunda, you can stay in the Kalamunda Carriages and 3 Gums Cottages which you can check out [here](#).

They're Bibbulmun track friendly with 10% discount if you're a Bibbulmun Track Foundation member. If you're interested in becoming a member and supporting the track, [head here](#) for more information.

In Kalamunda, near the Trail Head, is the Perth Hills Visitor Centre. Here is where you first sign in the logbook to say you are on the track.

They are a great resource for information as well if you want to see more details you can head to their [website](#).

Happy trails, everyone!

Aside from the Bibbulmun, what other long-distance trails have you walked here in Australia?