This walk starts from the Girrakool picnic area and winds down alongside Piles creek, before climbing up through the Brisbane Waters National Park to Scopas peak, and then on to the lovely Kariong brook falls. The walk finishes at the Staples Lookout. This walk mostly follows a section of the Great North Walk. Depending what time you start, either Scopas Peak or Kariong Brook can make great lunch and rest stops.
Girrakool Picnic Area

Girrakool picnic area is a wonderful family destination, just 5 minutes’ drive from Kariong. The picnic area provides all the necessary facilities for a full day’s activities, including barbecues, tables, shelters, water and toilets. National Park fees apply. The main picnic area is on the eastern side of the car park, and smaller, older picnic area is at the north-eastern corner of the car park. The southern Girrakool picnic area is located near the toilets. The picnic area is dedicated to John ‘Jack’ Higgs, the first superintendent of Brisbane Water National Park, and Mrs Vera Murdoch, who provided the funds. ‘Girrakool’ is an Aboriginal word meaning ‘place of still waters’.

Illoura Lookout

Iloura Lookout, Brisbane Water National Park, can be found a short walk south-west of the Girrakool picnic area, following the Great North Walk sign. This lookout provides a filtered view up and down the Leask and Piles Creek junction. There is a view of a waterfall from Piles Creek. Iloura is an Aboriginal word referring to a pleasant or peaceful place.

Piles Creek Lookout

Piles Creek lookout (not formally named), Brisbane Water National Park, sits high on the ridge, east of Piles Creek and north of Rat Gully. This lookout provides views over the Piles Creek valley and can be enjoyed from behind a fence. The valley is surprisingly steep at this point and the views downstream are quite extensive.

Monolith Cave

Monolith Cave is an informally named cave and interesting rock formation high on the ridge east of Piles Creek and North of Rat Gully in the Brisbane Water National Park. The cave is a fairly large sandstone overhang on the edge of the track. The cave provides shelter for walkers and is a great spot to rest and enjoy the area. This rock and the more Monolithic rock about 60m to the south are interesting to explore, and provide great views of the surrounding area. Take great care if exploring the rocks.

Kariong Brook Falls

This tranquil spot of the Great North Walk is home to some lovely falls and a water hole. The eastern side of the creek has a tall sandstone cave and wall. After rain these falls can become very spectacular, other times is a cool place to rest. A great spot to stop for a snack.

Before You walk

Bushwalking is fun and a wonderful way to enjoy our natural places. Sometimes things go bad, with a bit of planning you can increase your chance of having an enjoyable and safer walk.

Before setting off on your walk check
1) Weather Forecast (BOM Hunter District)
2) Fire Dangers (Greater Sydney Region)
3) Park Alerts (Brisbane Water National Park)
4) Research the walk to check your party has the skills, fitness and equipment required
5) Agree to stay as a group and not leave anyone to walk solo

Think before you TREK

The ‘Think before you TREK’ program developed by NSW Police & NPWS promotes the benefits of planning ahead for your bushwalking trip by using an easy to remember acronym:

T - Take adequate supplies of food, water, navigation and first aid equipment.
R - Register your planned route and tell friends and family when you expect to return.
E - Emergency beacon (PLB’s) should be carried on walks with significant gaps in mobile coverage (check terrain profile).
K - Keep to your planned route and follow the map and walking trails.

Topo Maps

The maps provided on wildwalks are helpful, but there are times where you may need maps covering a broader area. Maps that cover this walk include:

1:25 000 Map Series: 91313S GUNDERMAN, 91312S GOSFORD
1:100 000 Map Series: 9131 GOSFORD

Grade

This walk has been graded using the AS 2156.1-2001. The overall grade of the walk is determined by the highest classification along the whole track.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Hard track</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>12.3 km One way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>5 hrs 30 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of track</td>
<td>Rough track, where fallen trees and other obstacles are likely (4/6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs</td>
<td>Minimal directional signs (4/6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Required</td>
<td>Some bushwalking experience recommended (3/6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>Storms may impact on navigation and safety (3/6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Limited facilities, not all cliffs are fenced (3/6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the lower side of the car park, this walk follows the 'To
Continue straight: From the west side of the creek, this walk
Turn right: From the intersection, this walk follows the
Continue straight: From the western side of Myron Brook,
Veer left: From the viewpoint, just west of Scopas Peak,
Traveling by car is the only practical way to get to Girrakool
spot to rest. The track then flattens out and comes to a 3-way intersection and
an unfenced rock platform, at the top of the waterfall.
Veer left: From the top of Piles Creek waterfall, this walk follows the track
heading south away from the waterfall (keeping the big valley to the right).
The clear track winds through the thick bush crossing a few small tributaries and
though four sandstone caves. The caves provide good shelter and a great
spot to rest. The track then flattens out and comes to a 3-way intersection and
a 'Girrakool' sign.
Continue straight: From the intersection, the walk heads south along the wide
trail in the opposite direction of the 'Girrakool' sign. Soon the track heads
down a short wooden staircase to the intersection at the bottom (Piles Creek
Lookout visible to the right).
1.38 | Optional sidetrip to Piles Ck Lookout
(20 m 1 min) Turn right: With the stairs to the right, this walk follows the
short track to the fenced lookout. There are a few steps that then lead down
the lookout platform. At the end of this side trip, retracing your steps back
to the main walk then Turn right.
1.38 | Piles Creek Lookout
Piles Creek lookout (not formally named), Brisbane Water National Park, sits
high on the edge, east of Piles Creek and north of Rat Gully. This lookout
provides views over the Piles Creek valley and can be enjoyed from behind a
fence. The valley is surprisingly steep at this point and the views downstream
are quite extensive.
1.38 | Int of Girrakool and Piles Ck lookout tracks
(80 m 2 mins) Veer left: From the intersection, this walk heads away from the
steps and lookout to soon pass a rock wall. A short time later the track leads
through the cleft in a rock to reveal a cave on the right.
1.46 | Monolith Cave
Monolith Cave is an informally named cave and interesting rock formation
on the ridge east of Piles Creek and North of Rat Gully in the Brisbane
Water National Park. The cave is a fairly large sandstone overhang on the
edge of the track. The cave provides shelter for walkers and is a great spot to
rest and enjoy the area. This rock and the more Monolithic rock about 60m to
the south are interesting to explore, and provide great views of the
surrounding area. Take great care if exploring the rocks.
1.46 | Monolith Cave
(220 m 7 mins) Continue straight: From the cave, this walk heads south
following the track away from the rock to soon come to another large and
interesting monolithic rock. Soon after this large rock the track starts to head
down the hill to come to an old fenced lookout, looking over Rat Gully.
1.68 | Rat Gully Lookout
(1 km 29 mins) Continue straight: From the lookout, the track follows the
bush track heading downhill. The track soon does a sharp left hand
back (at the 'Girrakool' sign) and continues down to Rat Gully. The track then
crosses the creek and boulder field following the cut steps (and passing the
old bridge). On the other side the track heads right, under the fallen tree and
then climbs up the hill. After a short meander through the bush the track
drops down and crosses another gully (passing a sign pointing back
to 'Girrakool') and coming to a 'Great North Walk' signpost and intersection.
Turn sharp left: From the intersection, this walk follows the 'Patonga Ferry'
sign up the side of the gully, keeping the intermittant creek to your left. The
track then passes a 'Patonga' sign then winds steeply up the hill for about
130m, through a cleft in the rock and past a few rock walls, and then the track
mostly flattens out with some filtered distant views. The track continues
gently uphill for another 300m, becoming progressively flatter before passing
along the side of a long rock wall, with a tall sandstone overhang. The track
then crosses a small gully and leads past another overhang, where the
track begins to lead downhill. The rocky track winds steeply downhill for about
130m to then cross an intermittent creek which flows over the solid sandstone
platform.
2.69 | Tributary Crossing
(2.4 km 57 mins) Continue straight: From the west side of the creek, this walk
climbs uphill following the rocky track. The track climbs for about 600m,
fairly steeply for a while then becoming progressively less steep. The track
passes a couple of rocky outcrops to then come to a large flat rock platform,
with a couple of small generalised sandstone caves. This track then leads off this rock platform and
continues up the ridge for just shy of 300m to come to the edge of a much
larger rock platform with more views. A series of GNW arrow posts lead
across this rock platform, generally leading towards Scopas Peak for about
400m where the arrows lead off the rock platform and back onto a heathy track.
The rocky track then leads off this rock platform and down across the
hill for about 150m to pass a view across the valley to Mooney Mooney Bridge.
Over the next 800m, the track leads up across a few more rock platforms
then climbs steeply up to a view point, just to the west of Scopas Peak.
5.11 | Scopas Peak
(1.2 km 23 mins) Veer left: From the view point, just west of Scopas Peak,
this walk heads south steeply down the rocky track, initially keeping the
distant view to your right. The track leads steeply down past a few rock walls
then climbs down over some rocks with cut steps, enjoying more views for
about 230m, and then the track mostly flattens out to lead gently down across
the narrow saddle. The track gently undulates along this ridge for about 750m
to come to a green painted metal box on a post (on your left), containing a
Great North Walk intentions book.
Continue straight: From the Great North Walk intentions book, after leaving your comments, this path leads down a narrow, steep
path passing through a few 900m of the track, to then walk along a wide, clear track
to the main walk then Turn right.
(2.7 km 58 mins) Turn right: From the intersection, this walk follows the
GNW arrow post downhill along the management trail (directly away from
the 'No Entry Past This Point' sign). The trail undulates moderately steeply in a few places through the brush then passes along a large platform, at the 'Girrakool Loop Track' sign down the steps. The footpath then leads into an intersection with the Broula Lookout track (on the left) and a 'car park' sign pointing back up the hill.
Continue straight: From this intersection, this walk follows the 'Girrakool Loop' sign down along the stone path. The path soon heads down some steps and
comes to a fenced and signposted 'Illoura Lookout'.
0.27 | Illoura Lookout
Illoura Lookout, Brisbane Water National Park, can be found on a short walk
west-south-west of the Girrakool picnic area, following the Great North Walk sign.
This lookout provides a filtered view up and down the Leaks and Piles Creek junction.
There is a view of a waterfall from Piles Creek. Illoura is an
Aboriginal word referring to a pleasant or peaceful place.
0.27 | Illoura Lookout
(1.1 km 27 mins) Veer left: From Illoura Lookout, the walk follows the left-hand 'Piles Creek' and GNW arrow down the wooden steps (keeping the
canyon to the right). The track soon passes a 'Caution Low Water Level Crossing Only' sign and crosses Piles Creek using the concrete stepping stones
(the creek may be impassable after rain). The track then opens up on a
unsealed rock platform, at the top of the waterfall.
Veer left: From the top of Piles Creek waterfall, this walk follows the track
heading south away from the waterfall (keeping the big valley to the right).
The clear track winds through the thick bush crossing a few small tributaries and
though four sandstone caves. The caves provide good shelter and a great
spot to rest. The track then flattens out and comes to a 3-way intersection and
a 'Girrakool' sign.
Continue straight: From the intersection, the walk heads south along the wide
track in the opposite direction of the 'Girrakool' sign. Soon the track heads
down a short wooden staircase to the intersection at the bottom (Piles Creek
Lookout visible to the right).
9.36 | Kariong Brook crossing  
(690 m 24 mins) Continue straight: From Kariong Brook, the walk crosses the creek and heads up the hill towards the cave (keeping the waterfall to the left). The track leads under the overhang and then winds up the rocky path for about 400m, past a few rock walls and among the grass trees. The track then heads up some more stone steps, bending left on the steps with a metal handrail. The rocky track continues up for another 130m over a few more rocks to come to a flat clearing (on your right, that has been used as a campsite). From the clearing, the track continues uphill, passing another rocky outcrop after about 60m, then after about 80m more, the track leads to a T-intersection with a management trail (and a sign pointing back to ‘Girrakool’).

10.05 | Int of the GNW and Patonga service trail  
(1.2 km 24 mins) Turn left: From the intersection, this walk heads north-east following the ‘Staples Lookout’ sign along the management trail. The walk steadily climbs uphill until to comes to a long rock platform with good views of the valley (to the left)

11.26 | Rock platform  
(620 m 13 mins) Continue straight: From the rock platform, this walk heads north east along the management trail, keeping the main valley views to the left. The trail winds up the hill to come to a four-way intersection with the power line management trail and a ‘Thommas Loop’ (sign pointing back down the hill). Continue straight: From the intersection, this walk heads up the hill following the service trail, past the National Park gate to the intersection of Woy Woy Road.

11.88 | Int of Thommos Trail and Woy Woy Road  
(370 m 7 mins) Turn left: From the intersection, heads along Woy Woy Road passing the large brown ‘Scenic Lookout 300m’ sign. The walk crosses the road (where safe) and crosses a grassy area to come to the car park and signposted Staples Lookout.

12.25 | Staples Lookout  
Staples Lookout beside Woy Woy Road, is a fenced lookout providing good views east across the Central Coast, the Brisbane Water and out to the ocean. There is a large car park and picnic tables, with plenty of natural shade. The lookout was named as a tribute to Charles J Staples, a pioneer of route that Woy Woy Rd now follows. The lookout was constructed in 1955 by the Rotary Club of Woy Woy. An inscription at the lookout quotes ‘and I shall meditate on your wondrous works’ from Psalm 119:27.
### Summary navigation sheet for the Girrakool to Staples Lookout via Kariong Brook Falls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>km</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Up/Dwn</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Initial directions (Use full tracknotes and maps for more detail)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Girrakool picnic area car park -33.4317,151.2766 (GR Gosford, 398995)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>270 m</td>
<td>From the lower side of the car park, this walk follows the 'To The Great North Walk' sign down the path to the lower picnic area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>Illoura Lookout -33.4336,151.2752 (GR Gosford, 397993)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.1 km</td>
<td>Turn left: From Illoura Lookout, the walk follows the left-hand 'Piles Creek' and GNW arrow down the wooden steps (keeping the valley to the right).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>Int of Girrakool and Piles Ck lookout tracks -33.4395,151.2677 (GR Gosford, 390987)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20 m</td>
<td>Optional sidetrip to Piles Ck Lookout. Turn right: With the stairs to the right, this walk follows the short track to the fenced lookout.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>Int of Girrakool and Piles Ck lookout tracks -33.4395,151.2677 (GR Gosford, 390987)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>80 m</td>
<td>Veer left: From the intersection, this walk heads away from the steps and lookout to soon pass a rock wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>Monolith Cave -33.4402,151.2677 (GR Gosford, 390986)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>220 m</td>
<td>Continue straight: From the cave, this walk heads south following the track away from the rock to soon come to another large and interesting monolithic rock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>Rat Gully Lookout -33.4417,151.2685 (GR Gosford, 391984)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1 km</td>
<td>Continue straight: From the lookout, the track follows the bush track heading downhill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>Tributary Crossing -33.4481,151.2653 (GR Gosford, 388977)</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2.4 km</td>
<td>Continue straight: From the west side of the creek, this walk climbs uphill following the rocky track.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>Scopas Peak -33.4614,151.2523 (GR Gosford, 376962)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.2 km</td>
<td>Veer left: From the view point, just west of Scopas Peak, this walk heads south steeply down the rocky track, initially keeping the distant view to your right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>Int of GNW and Gosford Rifle Range trail -33.4696,151.2532 (GR Gosford, 377953)</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>2.7 km</td>
<td>Turn right: From the intersection, this walk follows the GNW arrow post downhill along the management trail (directly away from the 'No Entry Past This Point' sign).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.96</td>
<td>Myron Brook crossing -33.4751,151.2655 (GR Gosford, 388947)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>400 m</td>
<td>Continue straight: From the western side of Myron Brook, this walk crosses the creek on the sandstone rock platform to follow the track up a few stone steps and up the short steep hill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.36</td>
<td>Kariong Brook crossing -33.4749,151.2693 (GR Gosford, 392947)</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>690 m</td>
<td>Continue straight: From Kariong Brook, the walk crosses the creek and heads up the hill towards the cave (keeping the waterfall to the left).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.05</td>
<td>Int of the Great North Walk and Patonga service trail -33.4768,151.2717 (GR Gosford, 394945)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1.2 km</td>
<td>Turn left: From the intersection, this walk heads north-east following the 'Staples Lookout' sign along the management trail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.26</td>
<td>Rock platform -33.4768,151.2832 (GR Gosford, 405945)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>620 m</td>
<td>Continue straight: From the rock platform, this walk heads north east along the management trail, keeping the main valley views to the left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.88</td>
<td>Int of Thommos Trail and Woy Woy Road -33.4749,151.2884 (GR Gosford, 410948)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>370 m</td>
<td>Turn left: From the intersection, heads along Woy Woy Road passing the large brown 'Scenic Lookout 300m' sign.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>