

Mossman Gorge and Daintree Wilderness Area

Recently QPWS acknowledged the fact that people were wanting to do some adventurous walks in true wilderness, other than the regular and sometimes congested trails in the areas to the south of Cairns. In particular, since the devastation wrought by Cyclone Larry in 2006, there are now few remote places to venture that aren't severely cyclone damaged. I was originally asked not to include some popular "local" tracks in my book as walkers were not encouraged to venture into some potentially hazardous areas, should something go wrong. They have lightened up in one area and that is the spectacular walk to the "Devil's Thumb", or Manjal Jimalji, to the north-west of Mossman.

The walk commences from a rough carpark near Diane Cilento's "Karnak" property. Five km north of Mossman go straight ahead at the township of Miallo then turn left a further 3 km along at Whyanbeel Road. Another 4 km along this road and after crossing the signed BA10 bridge you take the 2nd left turn towards Karnak. Veer right at the Karnak entrance and immediately after a cattle grid right again along a rough 4wd track. The road ends about 700m along this road.

This is a strenuous walk at least for the first 2 to 3 hours of altitude gaining. Once you reach the coral fern patch at around 970m you are guaranteed a new lease of energy. This is a special place and like no other readily accessible place in the wet tropics. This area looks like a patch of lawn from down below but is a pure stand of coral fern (*Gleichenia* sp) and views abound. With rightful concern about damage to this delicate place (and in deference to the snakes that like to lie on the trail) the parks authority have constructed an interesting aluminium walkway through this area – quite bizarre given the remoteness of the location and surely visible from space!)

It's cool and easier going from here as the track follows the ridge north for about an hour and eventually down towards the aptly named "Thumb". The area around the Thumb is potentially very dangerous. Rocks may be slippery and exposed areas subject to wind gusts. Let someone know where you are going!

Allow yourself a full day for this walk, ideally starting very early to do the hardest part before the sun heats things up. There is no readily available water up top and neither are there any good spots to throw a swag so this is ideally a day walk.

QPWS have a recommended brochure available but is not yet on-line so call or drop in to the Cairns or Mossman office.

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