

The Pink Track

Before you start

Before starting your bush walk, ensure you always let someone know of your whereabouts. The Australian Federal Police provide security to the ANSTO site and, as a courtesy, should also be notified on 02 9717 3355 as to when and where you are going. Being bush tracks, they can often be rocky and slippery particularly after wet weather. Ensure you are well equipped by wearing boots or sturdy shoes, along with taking a water bottle, mobile phone and wearing a hat and sun cream, particularly on warm days.

Length of walk and duration

The Pink Track is marked with pink and sometimes red markers and is the easiest of the ANSTO walks. The 4km long walk can be abbreviated to 2 kms, passes through several vegetation types and offers views of the Woronora Valley. The walk can be completed in 1 hr 30m at a relaxed walking pace.

Motel to Marker P1 (300m)

From the ANSTO motel, walk east past the communications tower to the electricity pylon on the valleys edge. You will see white trunked Scribbly Gums and black trunked Bloodwoods. Keep an eye out for a large Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*) just before the pylon.

Marker P1-P2 (300m)

P1 is on the northern edge of the pylon. The track descends through shrubby vegetation to a seepage line. Be mindful of cob webs made from large but harmless Orb Weaver spiders, particularly common in summer. The track then ascends into Open Schlerophyll (hard leafed) Forest dominated by Sydney Red Gums (*Angophora costata*) with smooth orange-grey deciduous bark. In the valley below, the large sword like leaves of Gynea Lilies (*Doryanthes excelsa*) form the under story. They are a spectacular sight when their large red flowers open on top of a stalk that can be 8m high.

The small, flat-stemmed *Bossiaea heterophylla* is also commonly seen and has yellow pea flowers with a chocolate keel. The vegetation on top of the plateau is noticeably different as conditions here are much drier and more exposed.

Marker P2

The Pink Track veers to the left and stays on top of the escarpment.

P2-P3 (300M)

A seat can be found just after P2. The bush here is usually open with the flower spikes of Banksias a major feature. In summer the Old Man Banksia (*Banksia serrata*) is in flower with large grey flower spikes and long saw like leaves. In winter the Heath Banksia (*ericifolia*) with tall redish spikes and tiny leaves is in flower, along with Hairpin Banksia (*spinulos*) which has tall honey spikes and narrow leaves.

Marker P3

Marker 3 is located at a 'T' intersection. Turn left here to take the short way back to the motel to P9 (total trip 2kms) or turn right to continue to P4 and complete the full 4km walk.

P3-P4 (300m)

Keep in mind this part of the track descends downhill and is often used by mountain bike riders. Due to moisture seeping downhill there is a noticeable change in vegetation, where Bloodwood trees (*Corymbia gummifera*) with a soft powdery bark often burnt black and the tufty Trigger plants a small, pink, four petalled flower (*Stylidium productum*) can often be found. The Trigger plants have an irritable trigger mechanism that deposits pollen on the back of visiting insects.

P4 (*Beware of slippery rocks*)

P4 makes a great place to stop and catch your breath, looking out into the Woronora Valley. In spring keep an eye out for the amazing bird life where the scimitar shaped wings and high speed antics of a pair of Peregrine Falcons that regularly nest in the area can be seen along with flocks of the Sulphur Crested cockatoos.

P4-P5 (200m)

This short part of the track will lead you to another lookout spot. The very shallow soils and moisture seeping along the bedrock encourage an interesting collection of heath plants. The small, pink flowers of the sprawling River Dog Rose (*Bauera rubroides*) are a feature as are the white flowers of various Eparicdaceae. In September between the track and the rocks to the left, you may see the spectacular red flowers of the Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*) NSW's state emblem.

P5 (*Beware of slippery rocks*)

P5 is another great place to stop and take in the view, however beware of slippery rocks.

P5-P6 (150m)

Immediately after leaving P5 on the valleys edge is an example of a mallee – in this case the Whipstick Mallee (*Eucalyptus multicaulis*). A mallee is a multi-stemmed eucalypt with all the stems arising from a swelling at the base of the plant called a lignotuber. This is a catastrophe resistant adaptation, even if all the stems are lost due to an event, such as fire, the plant will recover. To the left is a more open area where a fire burnt in the recent past. As a consequence until the under shrubs re-establish themselves this is a great area for ground orchids. The white flowers of *Caladenia catenata* open like a gloved hand. There are also the blue spotted flowers of Sun Orchids (*Thelymitra ixioides*) so called because they only open on sunny days.

P6

P6 is known as the site of sandstone quarries. The local sandstone was used as road aggregate for many years until better materials became available.

P6-P7 (180m)

A short distance past the quarry is P7.

P7

P7 is the furthest point on the track. The Pink Track turns left (North/West) up the hill. You may also notice a road to the right that descends to the river at the causeway however it is very steep and returning is a challenge for the not so young.

P7-P8, (600m)

The Pink Track turns left (North/West) and climbs above the quarry, it then turns left (West) as it reaches the plateau and skirts disturbed land near a water tank and communications tower.

P8

This marker near the edge of New Illawarra Road is where the track turns abruptly South/West.

P8 –P9 (800m, level)

The track is now on an old alignment of the road as is obvious from the bitumen. There are many hakeas along here distinguished by large woody follicles containing two seeds: *sericea* with spiky leaves and large ‘nuts’ and *dactyloides* with flat leaves and smaller ‘nuts’.

P9-Motel. (800m level)

This part of the walk is the homeward stretch. It’s an easy stroll back to the motel and a great time to warm down after the 4km long walk.