



With social media these days, there are a lot of places that receive a crazy amount of hype, and a lot of the images are manipulated to make the location look to be better than it actually is.

Bluff Knoll is not one of those places.

It's the second highest peak in Western Australia, located in the Stirling Range, and just over an hour north of Albany (or 4.5 hours southeast of Perth).

Now, I'm a diehard sunrise hiker. There is nothing I love more than reaching a peak and witnessing the sun rising *below* me (or what feels like it). So that's exactly what I did this time too. My partner Denya also joined me on this leg burner, and I'm so glad we got to experience this amazing morning together.

That said, there are a couple things you'll need to know to be prepared for this one.



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Difficulty

Bluff Knoll is 1098m above sea level, 6.8km long, and regarded as a 'Grade 4' hike. Some sections get quite steep, and you will also come across some wetter areas from the water running down the mountain. There are also many, many stairs that you'll eventually become great friends with along the way! Overall, it takes roughly 3 hours return.

What to Bring

A sturdy and bright headtorch.

You'll also need a good amount of water; about 2-3L per person. This hike does get hard and you need to keep your fluids up.

If you plan on doing this in time for the sunrise, and are up to the task of carrying a little extra weight, a Thermos with coffee or tea is a great idea! I couldn't tell you how jealous I was of people at the peak sipping on their coffees.

Pack some warmer clothes too, because it gets absolutely freezing at the top – especially if there is wind and cloud about.



Bring along a sturdy and bright headtorch.

Cost

There is a \$15 entry fee for a day pass to Stirling Range – or, look into a Park Pass here if you plan to head to other national parks too.

Accommodation

There are a few options around, so be sure to either book your camp area... or be prepared to drive over an hour at 3am from Albany to make it for sunrise!

Woogenellup Rest Area: Free camp, 35 minutes out. Find out more here.

There are also other options around that are closer. These include:



Stirling Range Retreat: Located 8 minutes from the Bluff Knoll car park, with a variety of accommodation options. Unpowered sites, powered sites up to chalets, and family rooms. This place also has a pool, camp kitchen amenities, and a small general store.

Mt Trio Bush Camp: Located 25 minutes from the Bluff Knoll car park, with both unpowered and powered sites.



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Our Sunrise Hike Experience

After the brutal wake up at 3:30am, we made our coffees and began the 35 minute drive from Woogenellup Rest Area. We arrived at the Bluff Knoll car park at 4:10am; it was pitch black, with a thick sheet of cloud rolling in above us. At that point, we were unsure if we were actually going to be able to see anything at the top. As we began the walk, we could see some keen hikers' torches lighting up their path, already halfway up the mountain.

The first couple-hundred metres were sealed, with just a tiny incline. Trust me, you'll be so happy to see this path again; once the path finishes, you make a turn toward the mountain and the ascent begins! We were around 200m into the ascent and that's when I started to wish I had a better breakfast than just a coffee! My stomach was already screaming at me for food, and 2.5km remained for us to reach the summit. As the stony path made a swift change to never-ending rocky steps, it was my legs that began to scream at me. The thought of food had been diverted to 'how on earth am I going to make it up this mountain?'



What felt like 3 hours of steps and climbing later, we made it to the summit!

At the time we hiked this mountain, the higher we went the more water would we'd see pour out of the ground and make its way down the rocky path. This made for an even sketchier walk upwards; everything started to get really muddy and slippery!

Now, if you're like Denya and need to know how far you have left until the summit, you're going to have to be stronger on this hike! The meterage on the signs has been removed, so the whole way up Denya had no way to know how long she had left to go! To make it worse, there was no one to ask; everyone was going up, just as we were. Hopefully, they've added markers back in for the sake of those who need to know.

As you get higher, you start to really feel the temperature and wind change. Starting out the hike in shorts and a long-sleeved shirt, we've been hit hard with this cold snap! Out of nowhere, it probably dropped 9 degrees and the wind cut straight through us. It was time to bring out the big Nat Geo puffer jacket and trackies! Ensure you are prepared for this, because even with the puffer and trackies I seriously underestimated how cold it could get at the top!

What felt like 3 hours of steps and climbing later, the track finally began to flatten out a little, turning into a subtle incline and wrapping back towards the left. It was still pitch black at this point, but we noticed some static torches and the voices of the other keen hikers (who were already half-way up when we started). Both of us knackered, we asked them if this was the summit.

'Yeah, you've made it.'



We made it to the top with 45 minutes still left until sunrise.

Those four words from that one stranger made our whole morning! We made it to the top at 5:45am, so it took us 90 minutes with 45 minutes still left until sunrise. Now for the cold wait! When looking for somewhere to sit down and watch the sun come up, be extremely careful – there is a sheer cliff edge.

Denya, not being a great morning person nor someone who likes the cold, found a little shelter in the rocks out of the wind. She didn't move for a full 40 minutes! Me, excited like a kid on Christmas Day, began scoping out spots to set up the camera. This proved to be a tad difficult, because I couldn't see a bloody thing!

As the time moved on and more sunlight began to peek over the horizon, the clouds blanketing us begin to lower and roll through the mountains. You never would have guessed that we somehow scored the most perfect conditions! The sun started to shine through and highlight the clouds that fell into the valley below us.

Fairytale stuff right there. Plus, to make things even more magical, someone got ENGAGED on top of Bluff Knoll! We ended up taking a couple of happy snaps for them and emailed them through after the hike.

As the time moved on, the clouds blanketing us begin to lower and roll through the mountains.

After the golden glow of the morning faded, and the sun hid behind some clouds, it was time to make our way back down the mountain. I tell you what, as soon as that sun disappeared and the excitement of the sunrise wore off, it was cold again... and guess what? I remembered how starving I was.

I still think one of the best parts about doing a sunrise hike is that you have the second part of the walk that you're yet to see. Everything that was once in the dark comes out to play, and you witness a whole new view.

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Everything that was once in the dark comes out to play.

There's a whole new view to witness on the way back down.

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The mountain range goes on for a lot longer than I expected.

This view was unbelievable.

This view was unbelievable. The mountain range goes on for a lot longer than I expected. After scaling down the mountain for an hour and a half, we made it back to the car park; back to food and another coffee to wake us up a little more!

If you're ever considering the Bluff Knoll walk, just remember to do a bit of research – especially on the time of year you're planning to go. Get prepared, but also get excited!

If you're ever considering the Bluff Knoll walk, get prepared – and get excited!



A Sunrise Hike to the Bluff Knoll Summit

Fairytale stuff right there.

I hope you have the best hike – and score great conditions like we did!