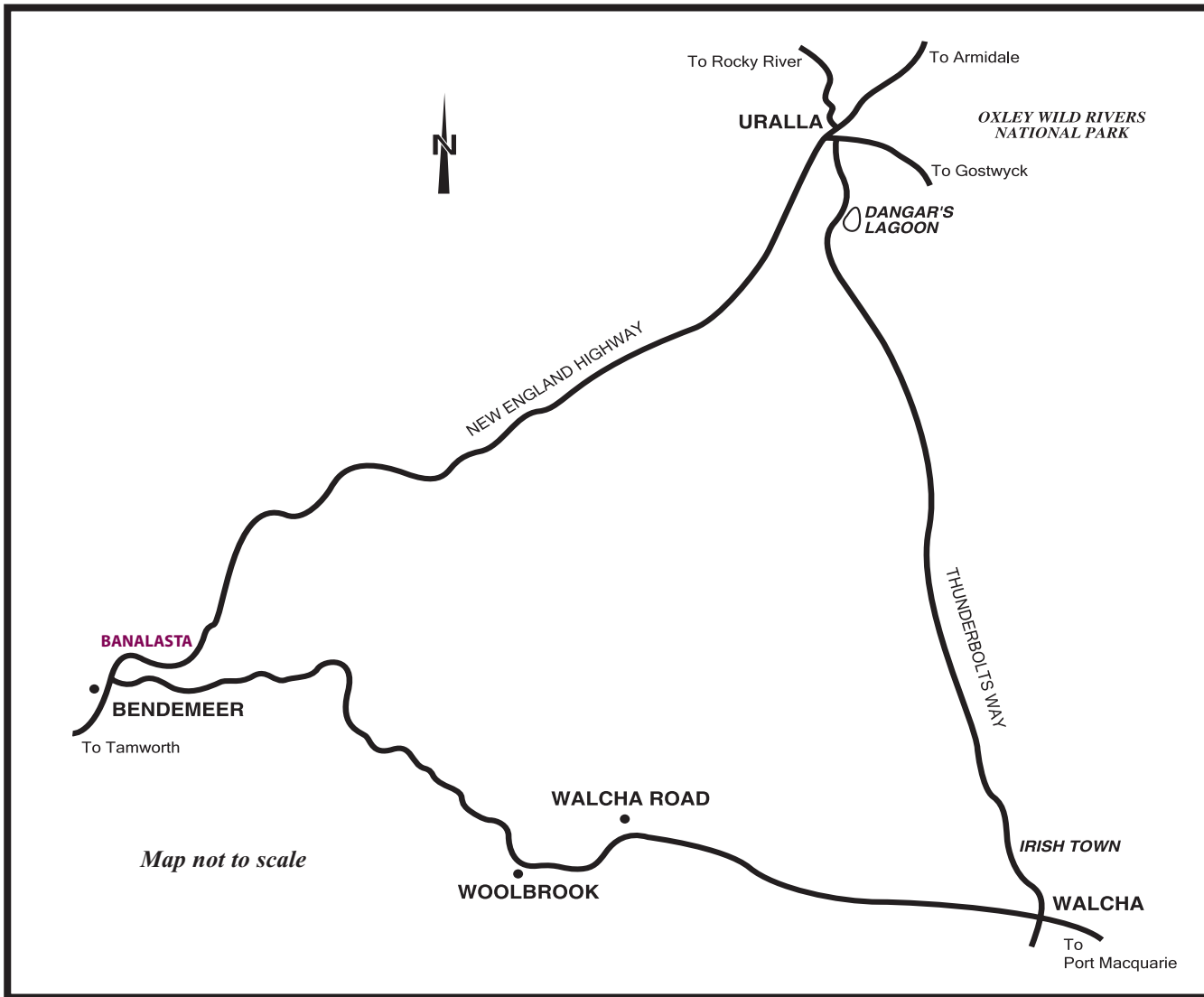


scenic drive 21

Eucalyptus, Sculptures and Fine Wool



Armidale Visitor Information Centre

82 Marsh Street
 Armidale NSW 2350
 Phone: (02) 6772 4655
 Email: armvisit@bigpond.net.au
www.armidaletourism.com.au

Guyra Visitor Information

Guyra Shire Council
 158 Bradley Street
 Guyra NSW 2365
 Phone: (02) 6779 1577
 Em: tourism@guyra.nsw.gov.au
www.guyra.nsw.gov.au

Uralla Visitor Information Centre

104 Bridge Street
 Uralla NSW 2358
 Phone: (02) 6778 4496
 Email: visit@uralla.com
www.uralla.com

Walcha Visitor Information Centre

Fitzroy Street
 Walcha NSW 2354
 Phone: (02) 6774 2460
 Em: council@walcha.nsw.gov.au
www.walchansw.com.au

Drop into the Armidale, Uralla and Walcha Visitor Information Centres or Guyra Council for more information on the beautiful New England region.



... will take you there!



Full Day Tour

138km

Bendemeer, Woolbrook, Walcha Road, Walcha, Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, Irish Town, Dangar's Lagoon & Uralla

URALLA TO BENDEMEER

This scenic route commences from Uralla and may be explored in either direction - south on the New England Highway to Bendemeer or by taking the Thunderbolt Way south to Walcha.

For convenience we will describe the drive starting with the New England Highway.

The Highway winds up and down the New England plateau indicating what the scenery may have been like prior to 1770. Wooded hillsides and open paddocks now accommodate sheep and cattle on large broad acre farms.

BANALASTA

Some 40km south of Uralla on the right is Banalasta, a property that grows its own grapes, eucalyptus and lavender. There is an excellent visitor centre, where you can stop over for a tea or coffee break and inspect the very large range of products made from their home grown list. These include wines, eucalyptus lozenges, lavender sachets and a multitude of skin care products. They will even show you how to extract the various essential oils from eucalyptus leaves and lavender grasses.

Open daily 9.30am to 4.30pm.

Just 12km further south is the old coach stop of **Bendemeer**. The coach and horses have long gone but the village remains as a reminder of those days. Drop into the famous pub for a short break or enjoy lunch, after a swim with the locals (in the summer!) in the lazily flowing McDonald River. Drive slowly around the village and savour the old, the new and the past.

BENDEMEER TO WOOLBROOK

Leaving Bendemeer, take the Oxley Highway due east and travel some 20km to the Woolbrook turn off on your right. **Woolbrook** is a tiny hamlet nestled amongst shady trees. Here you can take some time out to throw a line into the McDonald River to catch a mountain trout, or cool off at a swimming spot. Woolbrook has some great old houses and sandstone block architecture, which fits aptly with the ambience of the town.

WOOLBROOK TO WALCHA ROAD

A further 11km on, is the left hand turn off to the **Walcha Road Hotel** (before the bridge in Walcha Road). In 2004 this original and beautiful hotel built in 1860 was burnt down, but it presently appears to be under reconstruction.

The owners have been somewhat inventive and imported an old railway carriage to substitute for the loss of the pub. An appropriate substitute as this was always a rail stop, patronised by rail workers and itinerant workers alike. Walcha Road was the main transport hub for most agricultural goods including timber, sheep and cattle to leave the Walcha district, and is now used for a daily return service from Sydney to Armidale.

WALCHA ROAD TO WALCHA

The Walcha Township, 20km east of the Walcha Road Hotel, is the gateway to the **Oxley Wild Rivers National Park** and also the World Heritage listed **Werrikimbe National Park**.

Call into the Walcha Visitor Information Centre for more information on the regions national parks.

Walcha (pronounced Wolka) was the first town to be settled in the New England region by Europeans back in 1818, with the arrival of John Oxley. It became a major sheep and cattle producing area, along with the gold rush in the 1860's and the timber getters with their bullock teams.

Today's Walcha produces a great and varied amount of primary products, including some of Australia's finest wool, fat lambs, beef and cattle. Timber production still plays a vital role in the economy of the district.

Just recently it has become a town for tourism, creating 27 sculptures that show off some of the local talented artists that live within the area. Walcha has lots of fine eating places and great variance of accommodation. There is also a museum to visit called the Pioneer Cottage. Please contact the Walcha Visitor Information Centre for opening hours.

WALCHA TO URALLA

The road from Walcha to Uralla, approximately 41km, follows the original pioneer track north, along which you will pass **Irish Town** about 5kms from Walcha.

This was an Irish settlement with market gardens and the Irish families that lived here helped on the many larger properties (sheep runs) back in the mid 1800's. Today, this abandoned slab hut and small farm is all that is left, along with a few hawthorn trees.

Travelling further north along the **Thunderbolt Way**, there are many properties and famous Merino sheep studs which were settled by squatters in the early 1800's. Most notable amongst these are Yalgoo, Miramoonah, Merani, Petali and "Terrible Vale," who's name possibly derives from a battle between aboriginal tribes, prior to European settlement, where much blood was shed, leaving only a very few survivors.

Dangar's Lagoon with its bird hide can be seen on your right about 10km further up the road. This natural pond has been dammed up, originally by the Chinese gold miners and again later when it was enlarged and used as a reservoir. Today, it is a protected wetlands reserve for the local bird life. In the bird hide is a very useful display of drawings of some of the birds that can be spotted from time to time in the lagoon.

On arrival in Uralla, you will see the **Brass & Iron Lace Foundry** and **McCrossin's Mill Museum**, home of Thunderbolt memorabilia and local history, along with many coffee lounges, galleries and antique shops in which you may have a pleasant and enjoyable break.