

Timeless Trees

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Tim the Yowie Man



Derek McIntosh and his son Andrew at Australia's largest tree. *Photo: www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au*

Tree tour: Make a half-day excursion by visiting my top five trees. Start at Ainslie's Corroboree Park, then check-out the lone pine followed by a morning cuppa at the War Memorial's cafe. Head south along Kings Avenue past the bunya pine and down to the ACT's last river red gum just beyond Tharwa. Stop off at Lanyon Homestead for lunch in their knockout cafe (on the way, you'll walk past two towering bunya pines similar to the Kings Avenue one) and ask them to point in the direction of the scar tree.

Australia's biggest tree

The manager of The National Register of Big Trees, Derek McIntosh, reports that Australia has "a new champion tree". It's a mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) and is hiding (as best a large tree can) in a secret grove of giant gums about four kilometres west of Geeveston on a private forestry road in southern Tasmania.



Brett Mifsud climbs Australia's biggest tree *Photo:*
www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au

The register records the largest of each different tree species in Australia by applying a formula that not only takes into account a tree's height, but also its circumference and crown spread. "It is constantly changing as people nominate trees they have found," McIntosh says.

"I knew when I first saw photographs of this tree that it was likely to be the biggest yet – its girth is phenomenal," McIntosh says. He has just returned from Tasmania to see the Geeveston giant with his own eyes, and field measurements have confirmed that it is indeed the largest recorded tree in Australia.

"When you approach it, it's a bit like Enid Blyton's fabled Magic Faraway Tree; moss and ferns everywhere and this massive tree rising from the forest floor and then disappearing into the canopy above," McIntosh says.

At 21.65 metres, its girth is bigger than the length of a cricket pitch. "It's a 15-hugger tree," McIntosh says, "it would take 15 people with their arms spread linked together to hug the giant."

But measuring its circumference was the easy part. Conventional means of calculating the height of a tree with a laser weren't possible due its height (you couldn't see the top of it!), so McIntosh engaged the services of daredevil tree climber Tom Greenwood. "He scampered up the side of the tree and measured the 500-year-old mountain ash at 77 metres," McIntosh says.

Usually trees of this size and age have extensive wind and lightning damage, but McIntosh reports that this tree, nicknamed the “Kermandie Queen” (after a nearby town), “is in good health and hopefully will be for another 100-200 years”. Canberra has six trees on the register. Our “biggest” is a Wallangarra white gum (*Eucalyptus scoparia*) in the Botanic Gardens, which – when compared with the Kermandie Queen – has a relatively puny circumference of seven metres, a crown cover of 28 metres and stands at just over 30 metres high. You can check them out at nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au.