The Square Rock Walk rewards the visitor with the best of what Namadgi has to offer—forests of mixed eucalypts, magnificent granite boulders and spectacular wilderness views. The walk starts at the Corin Hub on Corin Road near the Smokers Gap entrance to Namadgi National Park. The track initially parallels the Corin Road, climbing steadily up to Smokers Flat which is a good place to rest. The track continues less steeply to the Orroral Valley Lookout turnoff. The side trip to the lookout is worth the effort. Square Rock is less than one kilometre further on the main track. There are some stone steps on the way and at Square Rock itself, cliffs and a steel ladder. The walk can be extended by returning via Smokers Trail.

Geology
Granite boulders and rock outcrops lay all over this landscape. The granite formed deep underground about 400 to 450 million years ago and forced its way up into the existing sedimentary rocks. Over millions of years, the sandstones and shales eroded away, finally exposing the granite. The rounded shapes of the boulders are due to a combination of physical and chemical weathering. Expansion and contraction of the boulders causes ‘onion-skin’ weathering where the outer layers separate from the main bulk of the rock in thin layers. Often boulders are undercut to produce natural shelters.

Home of the Ngunnawal people
The Ngunnawal people have a continuing connection to their Country and the entire landscape in this region. They feel culturally and spiritually connected to their ancestral places. Smokers Gap, at the start of the walk, is thought to be a place where Aboriginal people camped during summer while they sought Bogong moths and other plentiful resources on the mountain-tops and from the surrounding forest.

Many of the granite boulders in this region provided natural shelters that were traditionally used by the Ngunnawal people for thousands of years.

Mountain flora
Snow gums grow in the cool, high altitude areas of Namadgi National Park and are the most common tree on this walk. Their leaves are tough and leathery and well-adapted to the cold. Scrubables on the smooth, grey and white bark are made by the larvae of scribbly gum moths as they eat the bark. In spring and early summer, colourful wildflowers make the walk particularly rewarding.

Mountain wildlife
Swamp wallabies with their dark bodies and long black tails, browse on shrubs within this forest. Red-necked wallabies which have reddish rumps and backs and a pale coloured tail can also be seen during summer. Look for their prints in boggy areas. Frogs can be heard calling from creeks, bogs and ponds adjacent to the track. Wombats are evident by their large, oval or U-shaped burrows, and their cube-shaped droppings that are often left on top of prominent rocks and logs to mark their feeding areas. Fresh diggings may be the work of wombats or echidnas. You may be lucky enough to encounter the olive whistler, a medium sized, olive-brown backed bird foraging for insects amongst the tea-trees by the frost hollows. Males call on and off during the breeding season from September to January. During winter, the birds descend to lower altitudes.

Fire
For the last 20 million years, fire has been a prominent part of most Australian landscapes including this one.

For thousands of years, the original caretakers systematically managed this landscape using fire. According to lore and cultural obligations to Country, the plants and animals were cared for and replenished through fire. Burning Country is vital to the continuation of cultural practices and spiritual renewal. Plants here have developed ways of coping with and surviving particular fire patterns. For example, snow gums are able to sprout new leaves and branches from large underground roots. Alpine ash are usually killed by severe fires but release millions of seeds afterwards. Evidence of fires can be seen in blackened tree trunks, thick revegetation regrowth, shattered rocks and changes in the mix of species.

Smokers Flat
About half way along the track is Smokers Flat, a flat, grassy herbfield with heathy bog on the edges. It is treeless due to cold air, flowing from surrounding higher areas, restricting tree germination. Eucalypts such as black sallees, with their olive-green trunks, occur around the edges, while adjacent slopes have mountain gum, candlebark and snow gum. A primitive water plant, austral pillwort, which is rare in the ACT, and a threatened herb, austral toadflax are also found here.
At Square Rock Lookout
You have climbed 270 metres to get to Square Rock which is around 1400 metres above sea level. Enjoy the view!

Please take care near the steep cliffs.

To the south-west, between Mount Gingera and Little Ginini, lies Snowy Flats, a sphagnum moss bog which stores water, purifies it, then releases it slowly during dry periods. Mountain wetlands play a vital role in maintaining Canberra’s water supply.

Black rock skinks can be found basking on the rock platforms in sunny weather while wedge-tailed Eagles glide above the cliffs on the warm updrafts. Lyrebird calls echo from distant gullies on still winter days.

Namadgi National Park
Namadgi National Park was declared in 1984, taking its name from the Namitch, a clan group of the Ngunnawal people. It is also part of the Australian Alps national parks, a network of parks across Australia’s high country in the south-east of the continent that is collaboratively managed across park agencies.

Suggestions for walkers
• Carry food, water, map and compass.
• Wear comfortable, sturdy walking shoes.
• The weather can change quickly at any time of year so be prepared with suitable clothing.
• Advise someone of your plans. Use walks registers.

Further information
Namadgi National Park Visitor Centre, Naas Road, Tharwa, ACT 2620
Phone: (02) 6207 2900
Access Canberra: 13 22 81
Email: namadginationalpark@act.gov.au
Australian Alps Website: theaustralianalps.wordpress.com

Leave no trace
• Leave your pets at home. Domestic pets are prohibited as they disturb native animals and other park visitors.
• Carry it in, carry it out. There are no bins so please take all your rubbish home for disposal or recycling.
• Leave animals, plants and rocks where you find them. It is illegal to remove them from the park.
• Use a fuel stove. They are quicker, cleaner and better for the bush. Open fires are not permitted in Namadgi National Park. Fires are permitted only in fireplaces provided at campgrounds and picnic areas. The nearest constructed barbecues are at Corin Dam, Gibraltar Falls and Woods Reserve. Bring your own wood. Ensure fires are completely extinguished afterwards. Total Fire Bans prohibit all fires including fuel stoves and gas barbecues. Fire danger signs indicate what fire restrictions are in place.
• Got to go? Use a toilet or take a walk at least 100 paces away from waterways. Dig 15 centimetres with a trowel, then cover human waste with soil. The nearest toilets are located at Woods Reserve, Gibraltar Falls and Corin Picnic area at the end of Corin Road.
• Respect heritage sites. Please do not collect, deface or damage Aboriginal or European cultural heritage artefacts or sites.
• Stay on track. Even if it’s muddy or dusty, don’t widen tracks. Motorised vehicles are not permitted beyond public roads, car parks or locked gates.
• Camping. A camping permit is available from the Namadgi Visitor Centre and is required for overnight camping in the Cotter Catchment (Bimberi Wilderness) portion of Namadgi National Park.