

Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa

The Wollemi Pine

The Wolgan Valley Wollemi Pine Grove

As Emirates Hotels & Resorts' first hospitality development outside Dubai, Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa is being built on the same principles as Emirates' acclaimed Al Maha Desert Resort & Spa, recognised internationally as a model of sustainable development. These resorts both support wide-ranging, large scale conservation practices, focusing on endangered species protection.

With approximately 4,000 acres of land dedicated as a wildlife reserve, the Wolgan conservancy project re-establishes and secures a future for many of the region's indigenous and endangered species.

This comprehensive conservation programme includes the planting of thousands of native trees indigenous to the area, overcoming the effects of previous cattle-grazing. One of the key initiatives is the planting of the Wolgan Valley Wollemi Pine Grove, which establishes on this protected site a stand of archeologically remarkable and unique species, the Wollemi Pine.

The Wolgan Valley Wollemi Pine Grove is the only other 'wild' Wollemi Pine grove in the world aside from the original grove located in the Wollemi National Park. It has been established with the assistance of David Noble, the New South Wales (NSW) National Parks and Wildlife Services Officer who 'rediscovered' the Pine in 1994.

History of the Wollemi Pine

The Wollemi Pine (*Wollemia Nobilis*) is one of the world's oldest and rarest tree species, endemic to the Blue Mountains. Belonging to a 200 million-year-old plant family it was known only from fossil records and presumed extinct by botanists until it was rediscovered in 1994 in the Wollemi National Park, just outside Sydney. Considered to be 'the botanical find of the 20th century', this discovery is akin to finding a dinosaur alive today.

With less than 100 adult trees known to exist in the wild, the Wollemi Pine is now the focus of extensive research to safeguard its survival.

Where are they?

The Wollemi Pine was discovered as a small grove of seedlings and mature trees only 200 kilometres west of Sydney in the Wollemi National Park. The Pines are growing on moist ledges in a deep rainforest gorge surrounded by rugged mountains and undisturbed forest. The exact location of the Pines is a closely kept secret because of the pristine and fragile nature of the wild habitat. Only select researchers are permitted to visit the area on rare occasions.

How were they found?

The Wollemi Pine was discovered in August 1994 by David Noble, a NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services Officer who, when trekking and abseiling with friends, noticed the unusual nature of the Pine and took a small fallen branch home for identification. A team of experienced botanists later declared the strange specimen a new genus with ancient lineage, making it a scientific discovery of international significance.



What do they look like?

The Wollemi Pine is a majestic conifer growing up to 40 metres high in the wild, with a trunk diameter of over one metre. It has unusual pendulous foliage with light apple green new tips in spring and early summer contrasting against the older dark green foliage. Another unique feature is its pattern of branching with the mature foliage having two ranks of leaves along the branches. Its bark is also distinct even from related species, looking very much like bubbling chocolate. The Wollemi Pine's closest living relatives are the Norfolk Island Pine, Bunya Pine, Hoop Pine, Monkey Puzzle Pine and Kauri Pine.

Are they protected?

Since the survival of the Pines in the wild depends on their isolation, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service have put regulations in place to minimise visits to the site and have developed a conservation strategy to protect the Pines from human activity including fire. The Wollemi Pine has also been listed under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 as well as the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995.

Where did the name come from?

The Wollemi Pine is named after the Wollemi National Park, the location where the Pines were first discovered in what is now the World Heritage-listed Blue Mountains Area. Wollemi is an Aboriginal word meaning "look around you / keep your eyes open". The scientific name *Wollemia Nobilis* is a reflection of these sentiments, while honouring NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services Officer David Noble, who found the first living trees in 1994.

The Wollemi Pine and the World Heritage Listing of the Greater Blue Mountains Area

The remarkable discovery of the Wollemi Pine in the Greater Blue Mountains Area was a key factor in the area being inscribed on the World Heritage List at the 24th Session of the World Heritage Committee in December 2000. The 200 million-year history of the Wollemi Pine, its evolutionary success and its status as a threatened species all contributed to building the case for why its home in the Greater Blue Mountains Area must be recognised and preserved as one of the world's top natural environments.

The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area consists of 1.03 million hectares of magnificent, Australian landscape, with *Eucalypt* forests spread over towering sandstone plateaux and escarpments, cut by deep valleys, plunging gorges and hidden slot canyons. The area includes vast expanses of wilderness and is equivalent in area to 30 per cent of Belgium.

This natural treasure-trove of unique Australian fauna and flora is located only two hours away from Sydney and is comprised of seven National Parks including the Blue Mountains, Wollemi (where the Wollemi Pine was discovered), Yengo, Nattai, Kanangra-Boyd, Gardens of Stone and Thirlmere Lakes National Parks. Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa lies at its centre, at the confluence of two rivers within a sweeping canyon, between The Blue Mountains and Gardens of Stone National Parks.

Wollemi Pine Grove visits:

All Wolgan Valley Resorts & Spa's guests will be able to visit the Grove as one of the nature-based activities on offer in the resort. The Wollemi Pine Grove visit will take about 1 to 1.5 hours.



- The tour departs from the Heritage Precinct every morning at 8:00am or in the afternoon at 3:00pm and includes a short stroll to the Wollemi Pine Grove, within the Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa conservation area.
- Guests will be met by their Field Guide and driven in a luxury four-wheel drive through creek crossings and Eucalyptus forests. Prior to departure guests will be served with light refreshments.

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