

YOUR GUIDE TO

HIKING

UPDATED - JULY 2017

HIKING SOLO, WITH A GROUP OR WITH YOUR KIDS

Consider the different levels of fitness, capabilities, experience, skills, personalities and pace of individuals when putting together your hiking group.

HIKE PREPARATION

PLANNING YOUR HIKE
TIME AND DISTANCE
TRAIL GRADING

11 TIPS
FOR BEGINNERS

17 BENEFITS
OF HIKING

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This eBook has been prepared with the aim of enhancing your hiking experience.

If you're looking for another adventure checkout my site, join me on Facebook and if you are able to, please feel free to donate. Your support will go a long way to helping out.

Darren Edwards
Author

Trail Hiking Australia

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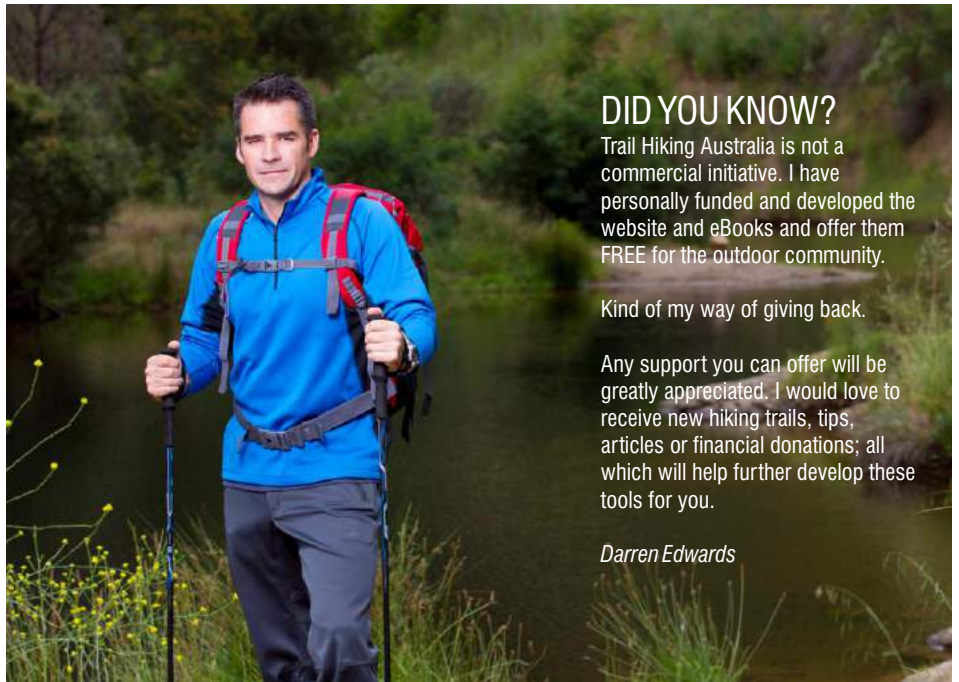
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DID YOU KNOW?

Trail Hiking Australia is not a commercial initiative. I have personally funded and developed the website and eBooks and offer them FREE for the outdoor community.

Kind of my way of giving back.

Any support you can offer will be greatly appreciated. I would love to receive new hiking trails, tips, articles or financial donations; all which will help further develop these tools for you.

Darren Edwards

PASSIONATE ABOUT HIKING

WHY I HIKE

I have been running my own design agency for the past 24 years and spend a lot of time sitting at my desk in front of a computer. I didn't do a lot of exercise apart from a few short walks and a bit of manual labour. One day I woke up and realised that I was not as fit or skinny as I used to be and running around after my two young boys would leave me feeling exhausted. I had just passed the 40-year mark too and felt like if I didn't make a change now then the second half of my life would really be tough.

I have always enjoyed the outdoors, walking, camping, fishing but had never truly hiked. In Christmas 2012 we were holidaying at the Grampians with friends when I decided I'd had enough of sitting around the campsite so I headed to the Pinnacle for a short hike. It was so tiring and felt like it took me hours to finally reach the summit. But I loved it. It hurt but it felt good. So the next day I work up at 5:30am, grabbed my pack and breakfast and headed up there again to watch the sun rise. I did that every day for an entire week before we returned home.

I was fortunate to be living on the edge of the Lerderderg State Park in Victoria's west so when we returned home I purchased a topographical map of the area and started hiking. I hiked every weekend, sometimes on both days and after approximately four months I was astonished that I had lost 14kg.

I hiked for fitness and I hiked for mental well-being. I found that getting up early on Saturday morning and going for a hike separated my working life from my family life and I could better engage with everyone around me. That is where it started and I have never looked back.

Now hiking has become my life!

WHY I STARTED

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I love detail, analysing and information. As soon as I started hiking I tracked and photographed every trail that I hiked. When I returned home from the hike I would write up detailed trail notes and would store all of this information on my PC for my own personal use.

In 2013 I joined a hiking group as I wanted to start to experience more remote locations that I didn't feel comfortable visiting alone. After speaking with people on hikes I was quite amazed at how little people knew of the local trails and parks close to Melbourne and beyond.

As my background is in web design I decided to set up a blog so that I could easily share trails with others. The site quickly grew and after two years of hiking I already had in excess of 150 trails that I had hiked, I had to find more.

Today my goal is to:

- Encourage everyone to care for their health through hiking
- Make it easier for the community to find quality web-based information on hiking trails
- Provide a central source of information regarding all things hiking including trail information, gear reviews, safety tips and planning advice
- Connect adventurers with each other and encourage everyone to 'discover their next adventure!'
- Reinforce Australia as a great hiking destination

The addition of trails to the website is an ongoing process. I am well on the way, but have a reasonable way to go before all of Australia's trails are published on this site – so please be patient if your favourite trail isn't there yet. Or better still, submit your favourite trails today.

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO HIKING

11 TIPS

words by Mountain Designs

WANT TO GO HIKING BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START?

This guide can help you prepare for your first hike wherever you are headed, ensuring you are safe and comfortable in 11 basic tips.

The great thing about hiking is you get to pick your speed and difficulty for the perfect amount of challenge that suits you. So what are you waiting for? Let's get started!

1. Decide how long you have to hike

As this is a beginner's guide to hiking, we're not looking to hike the Appalachian Trail – but rather trails that can be done in less than a day, that won't require you to pack a tent, or bring extra change of clothes. Pick a hike based on how much time you have – do you have the entire Sunday? Or do you just have a few hours on a Tuesday afternoon?

2. Decide if you'll be hiking solo or with a friend/group

Solo hikes may have its advantages (mobile meditation anyone?), however it is also more dangerous should anything happen while you're out on the trail. It would be recommended buddying up with a friend or your significant other particularly for your first hike – it's a great bonding opportunity!

3. Determine your starting level

If you are a complete newbie, sending yourself out on an eight hour hike through the unmapped wilderness is highly not recommended. Start slow, and pick places you're familiar with that will allow you to stop when necessary and get back to your car or home quickly.

4. Pick your hiking location

If you don't have a place in mind, hop on Google to find the closest national park, or ask your friends/co-workers if they know of any good spots. Do some research as you'd be surprised how many places are out there ready for you to explore!

5. What to Wear

- Base layer: Sweaty cotton takes forever to dry, so choose a "technical" fabric: moisture-wicking polyester or wool. Wool? Yep, lightweight wool wears comfortably in warm weather on the trail, and it retains few odours.

- Pants or shorts: Convertible pants are popular. Their lower-leg portions can zip off if you want more air and sun.
- Footwear: Full- or mid-cut boots are traditional backpacking choices, though some folks prefer light hikers or even trail runners. Tennis shoes and urban/athletic footwear are too flexible for roots and rocks on trails. Packing an extra pair of sandals for lounging in camp are a nice luxury if you don't mind toting the weight.
- Socks: Avoid cotton. Wearing it on the trail is asking for trouble (as in blisters). Choose wool or synthetic socks in a weight or thickness compatible with your footwear.
- Head cover: Brimmed hats, caps, bandanas – whatever your choice, it's smart to shield your scalp from all-day sun exposure. Bring ample sunscreen for exposed skin.
- Outerwear: Even if dry weather is forecast, a rain jacket keeps bugs off your arms and torso. An insulation layer (jacket or vest) wards off chills early or late in the day.

6. What to Pack

Now, a lot of this will depend on how long your planned hike is and what sort of weather/obstacles/adventures you're bound to get yourself into on the hike. Here are just some of the recommended essentials:

- Some sort of small backpack. You won't be travelling with too much stuff, so you don't need to go out and buy a 75L ultra backpack. Any sturdy bag that will hold your stuff is sufficient for now – if you decide down the road to get super serious about this camping stuff, you can invest money.
- Make sure your mobile is fully charged and ready to go – a phone can help bail you out in case of emergency, and if you have a smart phone it can multitask as your camera, compass, distance tracker, mapper, and so on. If you don't have a smart phone, bringing a compass or GPS system isn't a bad idea.
- Sunscreen – If it's sunny outside and you're hiking through the woods or up a mountain with a cool breeze in your face, you probably won't be able to tell that your ears and face are getting absolutely torched. Get yourself some 30+ SPF waterproof/sweatproof sunscreen to cover up those ears, cheeks, and back of your neck.
- Bug spray – especially if it's "that time of the year" in your area where bugs are out in full force. Nothing worse than coming home to arms and legs covered in bug bites.
- First aid – Having some first aid stuff with you is a good idea: band-aids and moleskin for blisters and cuts, some type of disinfectant for cuts/scrapes, and maybe a bandage or two just in case.
- Pocket knife – Not essential if you're in a park, but a good thing to have with you out in the woods so you're prepared for anything.
- Sunglasses – No need to go blind while out on the trail. You probably already have sunglasses floating around your house: I'd recommend bringing the \$10 ones rather than the \$250 Ray-Bans.

7. What to Eat:

How much you need to bring will depend greatly on your type of trip, but you want to make sure you are adequately prepared for your adventure.

- Nuts – Almonds or walnuts. Great for snacking on and loaded with healthy fat and protein.
- Water – Make sure you bring enough water with you to keep you hydrated through your adventure – a liter or two should be sufficient. Not only that, but make sure you have been consuming water before you go hiking so that you're not starting at a hydration deficit.
- Fruit – Throw two or three apples in your bag. Things like bananas, raisins, and other fruit are good options as well – pick based on your personal preference and tastes.
- Bread and almond butter – If you're going to be gone all day and you're a bread eater – toss a loaf of wheat or flaxseed bread, a butter knife, and a jar of almond butter or peanut butter in your bag – doesn't get much simpler than that. If you're not a bread eater, cut up your apples and dip the slices into the almond butter – best snack ever.
- Beef jerky – Make your own or go with some high quality stuff from supermarkets. Lots of protein, easy to pack, and keeps well.

8. Aim for the high ground

Hiking to the top of a mountain, the high point in a town, or the roof of a building gives you a great halfway point to stop, eat some lunch or dinner, and enjoy the view. Another bonus of going up is you already know exactly how far you need to go on your way down. One piece of advice on going down a steep mountain or a lot of steps: shorten your stride. Also take care to land on the balls of your feet with a bent knee if possible – if you're landing on your heels for thousands of steps, it can wreak havoc on your knees and joints as there's no shock absorption.

9. Make a hiking soundtrack

Now, you might be interested in listening to the sounds of nature while you hike. However if you are in a familiar area, and you feel comfortable putting on music, make an epic hiking soundtrack. Your workout playlist can come in handy to push you up the difficult parts.

10. Clean up/check for ticks

If you're in a heavily wooded area and carving through the wilderness, check yourself for ticks. Also make sure you take a shower with hot water and soap immediately when you get home in case you came in contact with any poisonous plants or other related nasties.

11. Give a hoot, don't pollute

Pack it in, pack it out. In the wilderness, no one cleans up after you. If you bring anything with you, ensure it comes back with you – remember the saying "take only pictures, leave only footprints"!

17 BENEFITS OF HIKING

IF YOU HAVE A TOPIC THAT YOU THINK WOULD MAKE AN INTERESTING ARTICLE FOR FUTURE EBOOKS PLEASE CONTACT ME

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Hiking is a great way to get in touch with nature and to get a bit of exercise as you explore. The great news is that it doesn't stop there. Here's a detailed overview of the benefits of hiking.

Weight Loss

Hiking is a super way to lose excess kilos. Obesity is now an epidemic in Australia – that's really bad! 64% of adults are overweight and more than 30% are considered obese. Our sedentary lives, stuck in offices, in front of computers, surfing this miserable internet is killing us. Move your body, burn off some calories, and lose weight.

Prevent Heart Disease

Each year there are approximately 55,000 heart attacks in Australia. That is 151 reported heart attacks a day, or one heart attack every 10 minutes. From the ABS National Health Survey, more than 380,000 Australians have had a heart attack. Over 2000 Australians die every day from cardiovascular diseases. While you've read this far, someone died and by the time you read this entire post 5 more will be dead. A regular walking routine greatly reduces your chances of heart problems. Study after study after study show that regular, light exercise increases your odds immensely.

Decrease Cholesterol

Hiking and walking increase the HDL good cholesterol which helps get rid of the bad cholesterol. This in turn reduces your chances of heart problems.

Lower Blood Pressure

Going on a short hike of 30 minutes every other day is all it takes. Lower blood pressure means better overall health.

Reduce Stress and Depression

Your body's natural drugs like endorphins and adrenaline are released when hiking and these chemicals have a natural positive effect on your stress levels.

Stronger Longer

As you age, you do not need to experience a decline in physical activity. By staying active, your muscles stay strong. As you get older, your body will weaken, but regular hiking helps minimize that.

Prevent Osteoporosis

Hiking helps increase bone density and strength, helping prevent the calcium loss and chance of broken bones from this disease.

Cleaner Air

Hiking to church, the store, school, or a local restaurant reduces the pollution from your car which makes the air better for everyone.

Prevent Diabetes

Hiking can reduce the amount of insulin a Type I diabetic. A Type II diabetic can reverse the course of the diabetes with exercise, diet, and weight loss.

Improve Arthritis

A regular exercise program can benefit most people that have been diagnosed with and treated for arthritis. Walking may be the best exercise as it strengthens muscles and improves support.

Relief from Back Pain

Sitting at a computer or desk too long can cause back pain. People that walk commonly report significant decreases in back pain. Hiking puts much less stress on your body than running or aerobics and helps build core body strength.

All Body Exercise

Hiking is an aerobic exercise that improves overall physical fitness, using leg muscles, core body muscles, and lungs. You set the pace and length that is a comfortable challenge for your body.



17 BENEFITS OF HIKING continued...

Experience Nature

Hikers explore natural settings that can only be reached on foot, leaving the hectic urban life and pollution behind for awhile.

Self Confidence

As more advanced hikes are completed, a hiker understands that he is capable of even larger feats. Making your way through foul weather or rugged terrain builds your confidence in what you can do.

Basis of Much More

By mastering hiking skills, you expand your horizons to mountaineering, backpacking, rock climbing and other outdoor wilderness activities.

Year Round Activity

You can continue to hike any time of the year. It is a great activity that can be done in all seasons so a single hiking tour can have many different looks as the seasons change.

Escape and Refreshment

The psychological effects of spending time in natural surroundings is positive and strong. Time spent on the trail will renew you for better performance in your job and life back in the real world.

Really when you read all this there is no reason not to give it a go.

GETTING FROM POINT A TO POINT B

How long does hiking take?

On any hike it is vitally important that you know how far the trail is and how long you anticipate the hike to take. Time and Distance Planning is particularly relevant when hiking with other people and over varied terrain.

Correct Time and Distance Planning involves having a good understanding of the different types of terrain and vegetation cover that will be traversed and the probable speed of the group.

Hike Schedule

Use the Naismith Law to estimate the time required for your hike. According to this law, a fit adult can cover 5 km of level ground per hour, and an extra hour should be added for every 600 m of uphill hiking.

- ▶ Plan to end your hike two hours before sunset.
- ▶ Select a gentle slope to go uphill. Avoid challenging yourself with a very steep or treacherous route right at the beginning.
- ▶ The party's entire load should be distributed among all members of the group, taking into account the strength of each member.

Is the group fit and fast or tired and slow?

Consider the pace and energy level of the average walker – high energy after breakfast, slowing down to lunch, slight increase after lunch but getting gradually tired and slower late in the afternoon (especially after climbing up hill all afternoon). What packs are they carrying – light day packs or heavy overnight packs?

TIME AND DISTANCE PLANNING

How fast can a group (6) of seasoned hikers with overnight packs travel?

1 kph – Climbing up a steep sloping spur with thick scrub

2 kph – Scrambling over large rocks along a steep sloping creek

3 kph – Walking down a steep sloping spur

4 kph – Walking along a flat track (this pace can be maintained all day)

5 kph – Walking with extra effort – Eg. Making an effort to catch the train

6 kph – Walking with considerable extra effort (only maintained for several minutes)

Modify pace according to:

Faster if – Fit, small light packs, less dense vegetation, flat ground, long legs, high energy levels, early in day,
Slower if – Unfit, heavy packs, thicker vegetation, steeper slopes, short legs, low energy levels, late in day, injuries/blisters,

To determine the expected time taken, divide the estimated distance travelled by the guesstimated pace of the group.

Eg. 2 kms to walk / 4 kph = 0.5 hr

Add up the times for each section of the hike, allow for rest periods (5 minutes/hr), tea breaks (additional 5 minutes every 2 hrs) to give a cumulative time for how long the walk is expected to take.

Experience will fine-tune your guesstimating skills.



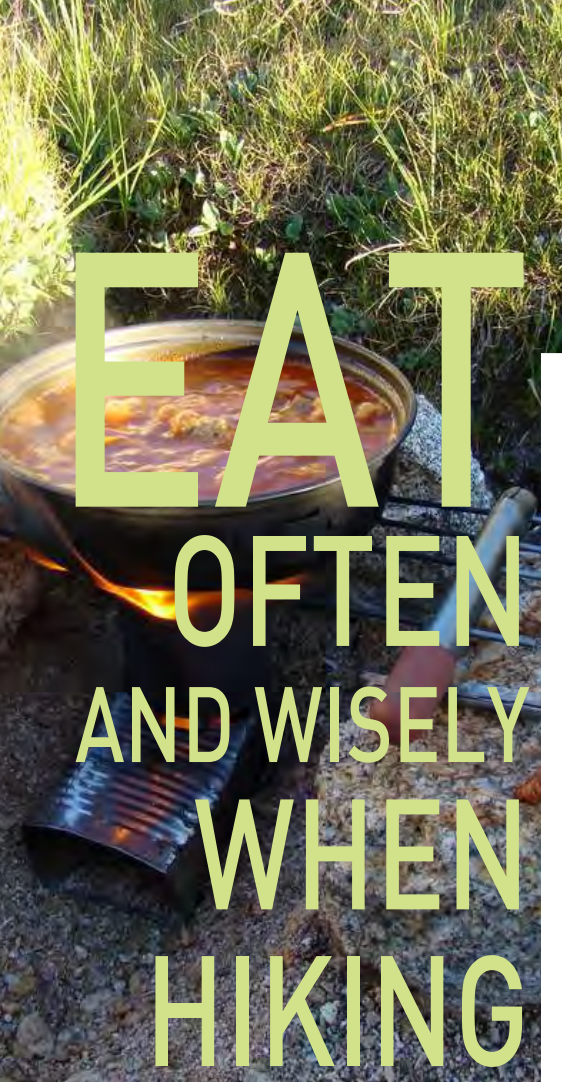
SCHEDULE SHORT BREAKS

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to taking a break on the trail.

Some hikers prefer regular breaks (such as every half hour) while others call for a break before or after a tough section of the trail, or in a cool, shady, or scenic spot. My suggestion is to allow for short rest periods of five minutes every hour. Leave your pack on so that your muscles don't cool down as this makes it harder to get started again.

- ▶ For lunch or tea breaks I would stop for a maximum of 15-20 minutes.
- ▶ Never eat or drink while moving.
- ▶ Relax to take refreshments. Don't hurry your food or drink.

Finally, remember that most hikes are not races (unless you are on one of my hikes). Get wet to cool off if you're getting hot. Unwind. Relax and take the time to observe and appreciate the natural beauty around you. Learn to look for the birds, plants and animals. They also need water and food to survive. Your observations may one day save your life.



EAT OFTEN AND WISELY WHEN HIKING

On overnight hikes, food and its preparation also contribute significantly to morale, providing a pleasant social end to a physically hard day.

A day spent hiking generally expends more energy than a typical one at home. So don't skip breakfast, eat a little more than usual and have frequent snacks of high energy, easily digestible food. On overnight hikes, have a generous serving of carbohydrates such as rice or pasta for the evening meal. Hot soup replaces lost salts and is an excellent starter to warm the tired body and the morale whilst preparing the main meal.

Popular quick acting high energy snacks include dried fruit, nuts and chocolate which, when mixed together, acquire the colourful hiking name of "scroggin". Simple but adequate lunches include bread or biscuits and cheese, with a little fresh fruit or salad vegetable.

Evening meals are generally prepared from dehydrated ingredients because of weight considerations. However, a little fresh capsicum, snow peas or bean shoots are also light and can add a certain edibility to the dish.

Although today there is a substantial range in price and variety of commercial dehydrated food on the market, there is an increasing number of overnight bushwalkers who enjoy the challenge of producing their own creations with home food dehydrators. You would be amazed at what you can actually dehydrate for your hikes.

For short hikes, food is more of a 'nice to have' rather than a necessity. But, on long hikes, an adequate food supply is critical to success and safety.



Since food is the main energy source for both exercise and maintaining body temperature, it is important to eat often and wisely when hiking, particularly on extended or physically demanding trips.

Food Requirements

Whether you are going on a 5km walk or a 500km long-distance trek, you should always have some food along. If for no other reason than just-in-case. Having a good idea about how much food will be required to provide the energy to complete the hike is part of good planning.

Food for Day Hikes

A day hike requires simple, tasty, cold snacks. Pausing for a rest, munching on a handful of fruit or trail mix, and then continuing your hike is all it takes. Food that packs well and tastes good is the goal.

Food for Trekking

Multi-day hikes require much more planning and preparation than a simple day hike. Planning food needs and a diverse menu is important to ensure adequate energy is available for your body. Running out of food 30km into a 70km trek is not a good thing.

Supply Options

Carrying all your food for shorter hikes makes sense, but as the distance increases the food weighs more. For long hikes, resupplying food along the way becomes a necessity. Depending on your style and discipline, there are many options for planning food along the way.

Cooking

Sure, you can live for days and weeks eating crackers and cheese and jerky, but at some point, you'll be ready to kill for a hot, steaming meal. On long-distance hikes, there are quite a few options for cooking your food so you can choose which works best for your trek.

Planning your Menu

Oatmeal for breakfast, peanut butter for lunch, and Mac-n-Cheese for dinner – now that's a good outdoors menu. But, not five days in a row. It's not that hard, and certainly not expensive, to create a tasty, easy, nutritious, diverse menu for any length hiking trip. Use this menu planner to plug in your food items, figure the calories, and even print a shopping list.





If you exercise regularly, you may be ready for short trips and easy terrain right now. But if you don't get as much exercise as you'd like, set up a basic training regimen that wakes up sleeping muscles and works your lungs more efficiently.

Getting Fit for Hiking

The best way to train for hiking or trekking is to mimic the activity as closely as possible. The amount of conditioning you need depends on your current fitness level and the kinds of trips you have planned. My belief is that the best training for hiking is to go hiking, but start small and build your way up.



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Best Approach: Start Walking

Begin with shorter, less strenuous hikes with a day-pack or light backpack. Nothing gets muscles ready for the trail better than the trail itself. Gradually increase the length and elevation of your hikes and increase your backpack load.

As you begin to strengthen your lower body and improve your endurance, switch to longer, more challenging hikes. Loading your backpack with the gear and weight you are most likely to carry will help you become familiar with conditions you will face deep in the back country.

If you don't have a chance to hike the great outdoors as much as you'd like, try the next-best option.

Hit the Gym

Try stair-steppers, elliptical trainers and climbing machines. These machines provide a great cardiovascular and strength workout. They isolate your lower-body muscle groups and help build endurance.

Consider step aerobics. Check out your local gym to see if they offer it. Or, do step aerobics at home with a bench and instructional video.

Lift weights. A backpacker does not particularly want to transport a huge upper-body mass on the trail. Still, a consistent, diversified weight-resistance program helps prepare muscle groups all over your body for the sudden jolt of day-long physical activity. Trained muscles are less susceptible to injury and strains.

Swim. A great aerobic workout, swimming is easy on the joints and good for the lungs and heart.

Getting FIT for HIKING

Use the Resources Around You

Take the stairs whenever possible. Walking or running up and down stairs in your home, office or neighborhood on a regular basis is terrific pre-trail training. You can even mimic step aerobics by running up 1 step and then back down, repeating the motion.

Walk instead of drive. If you can perform routine chores by leaving your car keys in your pocket, do it. Walk to the library, the park or the store. Toss a weighted day-pack on your back for a little extra benefit.

If you have a bike, start pedaling. Cycling is another good way to condition your legs and increase endurance.

Jogging is also a popular training option to get in shape for backpacking. But use caution if you're not already a runner, since jogging can lead to muscle strains that backpacking may aggravate.

Training Time frame

How long does it take to get into hiking shape? That depends on you. The better shape you're in now, the faster you'll be ready for a long-haul trip. Extra diligence and more lead time are also helpful.

Be patient and listen to your body. Aim to do some form of exercise at least 3 times a week for a minimum of 30 minutes each time.

Your efforts will be amply rewarded with a happier, more relaxed time out on the trail.

PLANNING YOUR HIKE



It doesn't matter if you are going for a half hour stroll or a multi-day trek, the principles are still the same, Plan your Hike.

While this list is not conclusive I hope it gives you the general idea that planning is the single most important aspect of anything you do.

I have gathered a few HIKING TIPS along the trail and have summarised them on my site as a quick reference for you.

These are some of the most important hints and tips I can offer to help you better enjoy your hiking experience.

Check them out at
[www.trailhiking.com.au/
preparing-to-hike/hiking-tips](http://www.trailhiking.com.au/preparing-to-hike/hiking-tips)

Will this be a solo or group hike?

- Research your trip using a current map and advice from experience walkers and local authorities.
- Understand the environment you are entering and risks associated with it, plan for the unexpected.
- Emergency response / rescue can take time always have an emergency plan factored into your trip.
- Know how to access local emergency response via phone and/or radio.
- Leave a hard copy of your plan in your vehicle and with a reliable contact person.
- Fill out trip intentions books at the start of trips and in huts if available.
- Notify your contact person(s) if you change your plans.
- Submit your trip intentions by downloading and completing this form.
- If you own a PLB ensure that it is registered and on every remote trip register your intentions here.

Your fitness and experience (or that of your groups weakest link)

- Consider your physical condition, medical knowledge, experience and skills for the area and type of trip.
- Travel within your ability and knowledge of area.
- Consider what navigation skills may be required?.

What are the forecast weather conditions?

- Always check a current weather report but do not rely on it, plan for worst-case scenario by carrying extra food, water, clothing and equipment.
- Consider aborting your trip if dangerous weather is forecast. This could include conditions like heatwaves, fires, floods, extreme winds or extreme cold.

What equipment should you take?

- Always carry maps and a compass, and know how to use them for navigation.
- GPS and mobile phones can help but they do not replace experience.
- Clubs can be a good way to advance your experience and knowledge.

Food and water requirements

- Always carry sufficient water for trip – day and overnight trips
- Carry more water than you'll need, plan for emergencies.
- Stay hydrated and do not rely on creeks unless you have reliable information.
- As with water carry sufficient food for the trip and pack extra in case of emergencies.

Shelter and clothing requirements

- Dress for conditions, bring extra and have wet weather clothing available.
- Always have enough to cover you for the worst-case scenario.
- Weather conditions in wilderness environments are sometime unpredictable.

Let someone know before you go

- You should always plan for the unplanned.
- Always leave trip intention forms with someone who can raise the alarm if you do not make it back in time.
- Always pack extra food, water and clothes for inclement conditions.
- You never know when the weather might change.



GRADING YOUR HIKE

In March 2011 the Council of Bushwalking Australia endorsed the Australian Walking Track Grading System, a voluntary walking track standard.

The Australian Walking Track Grading System is a nationally consistent system to grade the level of difficulty of the track walking experience and then to clearly communicate that information to walkers.

The grades are:

Grade 1



No bush walking experience required. Flat even surface with no steps or steep sections. Suitable for wheelchair users who have someone to assist them. Walks no greater than 5km.

Grade 2



No bush walking experience required. The track is a hardened or compacted surface and may have a gentle hill section or sections and occasional steps. Walks no greater than 10km.

Grade 3



Suitable for most ages and fitness levels. Some bush walking experience recommended. Tracks may have short steep hill sections a rough surface and many steps. Walks up to 20km.



SKILLS FOR HIKING

Are you new to hiking or have hiked for a while and are keen to further develop your Hiking Skills?

One of the things I love most about hiking is the feeling of remoteness. Getting back to basics, away from the office and technology, and being able to stop and appreciate our natural environment.

Anyone who can walk can hike, it really is that simple. That being said, the simplicity of putting one foot in front of the other should not be taken for granted. A few basic hiking skills can go a long way to ensuring you and your group have an amazing time on the trail.

Find out more about the skills needed for hiking at www.trailhiking.com.au/preparing-to-hike/hiking-skills

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS A GRADE 3 HIKE?

Grade 4



Bush walking and navigation experience recommended. Tracks may be long, rough and very steep. Directional signage may be limited.

Grade 5



Very experienced bush walkers with specialised skills, including navigation and emergency first aid. Tracks are likely to be very rough, very steep and unmarked. Walks may be more than 20km.

How to Grade Walking Tracks using the Australian Walking Track Grading System

The grading system operates at two distinct tiers.

- A technical grading of the walk where the land manager determines the walk's grade of difficulty using a set of technical questions based on the Australian Standard 2156.1-2001 Walking Tracks – Classification and Signage; and
- A 'plain English language' description to describe the walk to the public.

For more information about the Australian Walking Track Grading System, including user guide on how to grade a walking track using the new standard visit the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries web site.

WATER KEEP YOURSELF HYDRATED

Water is YOUR most critical survival tool – whether in the wild or at home.

Water and Hydration Rule of 3:

You can live **3** minutes without air.

You can live **3** days without water.
(they won't be very pleasant ones)

You can live **3** weeks without food.

You'll have air to breathe unless you're under water or in a cave-in. If you run out of food, you can struggle on for 150 miles if needed. But, if you run out of water, you have only a day or so to figure out a solution.

It consistently amazes me how many times I see people out for a walk or hike with nothing but the clothes they are wearing. Sure when you are walking around the suburbs you don't have to be too concerned about carrying water, snacks and basic medical supplies but when you venture into the bush even for as little as for a leisurely stroll you need to be prepared to come back alive.

That may sound a bit dramatic but I have read countless stories about people becoming lost and coming close to or meeting their demise on short walks into the great unknown.

Don't even think of starting on a hike that takes you more than a kilometre from the trail head without a bottle of water along. You should have at least one litre with you and consume 250ml every 30 to 45 minutes. Keep the water flowing into your body even if you don't feel thirsty. Do you realize that by the time you actually feel thirsty you are already dehydrated? If you are hiking, you are losing moisture and you need to replace it.

By the end of a 4-hour hike, you should have consumed two litres of water and you should be able to go to the toilet. Urine that is light yellow (straw colour) is a good indication that you're getting enough fluid. If you don't need to urinate then all the water you drank left your body as perspiration and you still need to drink more water to re-hydrate. Following a hike, you should drink additional water with electrolytes until you need to use the toilet. I don't mean scull it down, just drink half a cup every 5 minutes or so.

TEN TIPS FOR FIRST AIDERS

words by Great Walks Magazine

1. Stay calm

Many moons ago, during a military first aid course, I was once told to stop and have a cigarette before treating a patient. I'd argue that advice is probably a bit too blasé, but the point is the cooler heads always prevail. Stop, breathe, assess.

2. Don't put yourself or others in danger

This concept is repeated ad nauseam, but it is pretty much impossible to be dispassionate about a friend or loved one in danger. Remember, you are their best chance of survival. Your safety and that of others is paramount. Without this, treatment cannot occur.

3. Review your kit for each expedition

There is no such thing as a perfect first aid kit for any given trip, much less for all occasions. Your needs will vary greatly by terrain, country, climate, time spent in the field, time from definitive care and risk acceptance. Be sure to review before each expedition and replace used items.

4. Be prepared to improvise

I don't know about you, but I rarely carry a cervical spine collar, traction splint or stretcher on my expeditions. If we possessed all the medical equipment we could ever need, we'd probably be in a hospital. Be prepared to think outside the box and use trekking poles, jackets, sticks, socks... whatever!

5. Emphasise patient comfort

The main difference between wilderness and urban first aid is the length of care, often measured in days rather than minutes. Keeping your patient as warm, dry and comfortable as possible is not just a nice thing to do, it also increases their chance of survival.

Update your first aid kit.

Inspect your first aid kit before every hike. Replace consumed items before you head out. **See what to pack in your First Aid Kit at...**
www.trailhiking.com.au/hike-safety/first-aid-kit/

6. Have a contingency plan

It helps to have considered your options before ever stepping foot on the trail. If an injury occurs and evacuation is necessary, what are your options? Are there alternate routes? Can you backtrack? Is a helicopter a possibility or will you need to hoof it? Don't wait until the heat of the moment.

7. Be super careful of head injuries

There's a tendency toward a "she'll be right, mate" attitude amongst Australians. We like to think of ourselves as a hardy bunch. However, head injuries should ALWAYS be treated with suspicion. If there is any loss of consciousness, evacuate immediately. Even if there isn't, continue to monitor the patient vigilantly.

8. Consider MOI

There is an awful lot of credence given to spinal injuries in many first aid courses, but it pays to consider the Mechanism of Injury (MOI). Did the nature of the incident warrant concern for the spinal column? If not, it's possible that there are plenty of other factors that are significantly more pressing.

9. Don't get tunnel vision

The wilderness is four dimensional – look around, look up, look out. Before you begin treatment, consider the environment around you and remove any hazards if it is safe to do so. Remember to monitor factors such as weather and available daylight as you continue treatment.

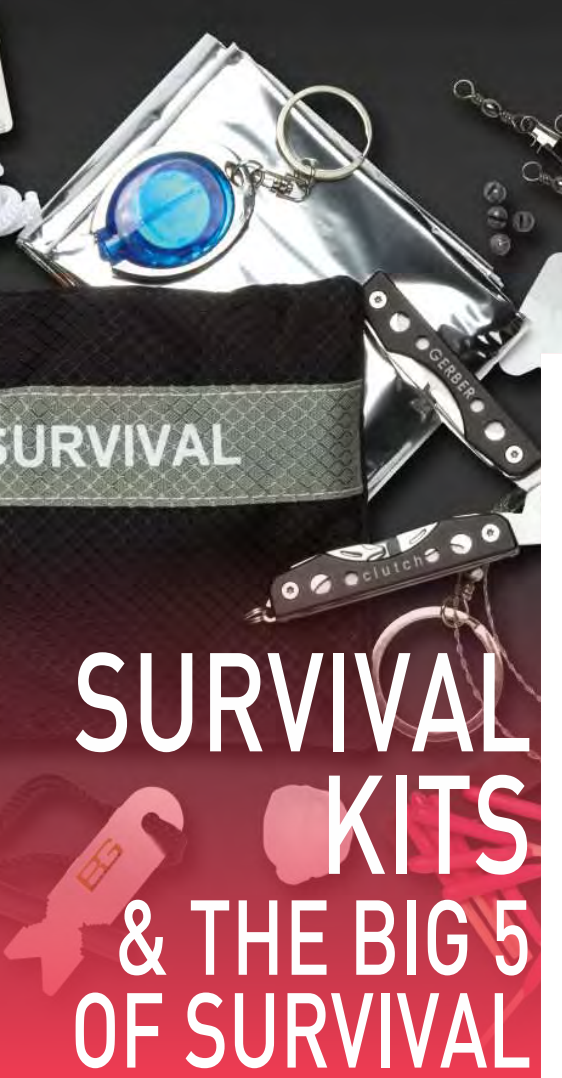
10. Get trained, stay current

Knowledge is power. A Wilderness First Responder (or "Woofer") course is your best bet to arming yourself with the amount of information and skills you'll need for responsible wilderness travel.



Whether you are training for an extended trek or hiking on the weekends, we've all felt the effects of sore muscles, blistered feet, or aching joints. Injuries can prevent you from doing what you are passionate about and hamper training efforts when working towards that next big adventure. With a few tips on how to prevent and treat common hiking injuries, you can keep doing what you love and hiking towards your goal.

Find out How to Prevent Common Hiking Injuries at
www.trailhiking.com.au/prevent-common-hiking-injuries



SURVIVAL KITS & THE BIG 5 OF SURVIVAL

I personally carry and highly recommend that you always have a personal survival kit, even on day hikes. Your Survival Kit should contain all the necessary items for survival in the wilderness.

The 'Big 5' priorities of survival are water, warmth, shelter, signals and food. With a well prepared and practical kit you will be better positioned to survive in the Australian wilderness until you walk out or assistance arrives.

Your kits should be packed in a compact, durable and lightweight container, small enough to fit into a large pocket and ideally should weigh less than 500 grams.

Items to include in your kit are:

- Duct Tape
- Safety Pins
- Heavy Duty Sewing Needle
- Heavy Duty Nylon Thread
- Compass
- Water sterilisation agents
- Water procurement bags
- Nylon Cord, Braided
- Safety Wire, Stainless Steel
- Knife or Scalpel Blade
- Signal Mirror or Flash
- Fish Hooks, Fishing Line, Sinkers and Swivels
- Firestarter or Flint
- Tinder
- Waterproof Paper
- Pencil
- Waterproof Survival Instructions
- Whistle
- Emergency blanket or bivvy
- Mini survival cards
- Tea Bag (so you relax while you think of a plan)



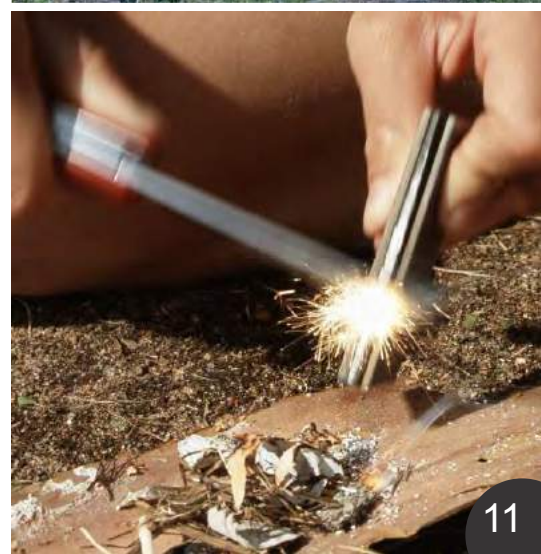
CARRY A FIRST AID KIT

Keep a First Aid Kit with you at all times. Even if you are going for a short hike, there is always a small possibility you could break a limb, cut yourself or get bitten by insects or snakes, so you need to be prepared for the worst.

Most first aid kits are compact and contain all the essential items you'll need. Update your first aid kit. Inspect your emergency and first aid kits before each hike. Replace consumed items before you head out.

If you are building a First Aid Kit from scratch I recommend taking:

- Compact first aid manual
- Pressure immobilisation bandages
- Regular roller bandages
- Triangular bandage for breaks
- Gauze or cotton pads for wounds
- Assorted bandaids for blisters and cuts
- Moleskin and/or blister kit
- Ointment for insect bites
- Antiseptic cream
- Tweezers and splinter needles
- Soluble pain relievers
- Antihistamine
- Insect repellent
- Salt (for leeches)
- Matches and Flint
- Personal medications – with instructions
- Notepad and pencil



SAFETY TIP KEEP DRY

Water is critical for staying alive, but it is also deadly when mixed with cold on the trail. Keep yourself and your gear dry. Keep Dry. Put items in zip-lock bags, sleeping bag in heavy-duty plastic garbage bag, clothes in waterproof bags. Carry and use rain-gear.

GET LOST?

When heading out on the trail, correct planning will help you to avoid Getting Lost. But what to do if you get lost to ensure you get home safely.



- Stop and think. Stay calm
- Recheck navigation and map
- Re tracing your steps a short distance may assist. Locate your last known point if possible
- Gaining some height may assist in orientation
- If above does not help STAY WHERE YOU ARE
- Find or make shelter to stay warm and dry
- Call for help using any communication devices you have with you; e.g. radios, mobile phones, satellite phones. Call your designated Contact People and/or local emergency services
- If other communications are not possible, and there is a threat of grave and imminent danger, activate a Distress Beacon (PLB or EPIRB) if you have one
- Attempt to make your position visible to searchers on land and in the air; e.g. lighting a fire or leaving bright clothing in an open area that can be seen
- If you are in a group stay together, never separate
- Be aware it can take a considerable time for rescuers to reach you so your priority is to remain warm and dry
- Ration your food and water if necessary. Source local water if possible and safe to do so.

ALWAYS CARRY A MAP AND COMPASS, ALWAYS

And know how to use them.

If you want to know how to get from point A to point B without getting lost (and your GPS is on the fritz), no need to ask for directions: just pull out your trusty (and probably dusty) map! Knowing how to read a map isn't difficult. The symbols, topography lines and direction helpers all might require a little understanding, but the answers are all right there! We'll show you how to find the key to finding your way!

For all hikes I undertake I actually use my smart phone and hand held GPX for a quick update on my current trail position but I always plan my hikes using a scaled topographical map and I always carry a map and compass in my pack.

Using a compass is a life saving skill – possibly your own life or someone in your group could be saved by your skill at reading a map and navigating your way to safety.

Read more about map and compass techniques under HIKE SAFETY at www.trailhiking.com.au



IS THERE AN APP FOR THAT?

You want topographical maps and offline GPS navigation when you're hiking into the wilderness?

Then Google Maps probably isn't going to cut it. To be honest, neither is your smartphone. Always carry a map and compass and leave electronic devices as a backup only.

Smartphone Trail Navigation is very common as a hiking tool. Unfortunately, some people think they are magical devices that keep people from getting lost – Nope! They are useful tools but should never be relied on. Continued use of GPS running in the background can dramatically decrease battery life. If they run out of batteries, get wet, or break, then it is a good idea to have a compass and a map as a back-up.

For all hikes I undertake I actually use my smart phone and hand held GPS as a quick update on my current trail position but I always plan my hikes using a scaled topographical map and I always carry a map and compass in my pack.

Most important tip is to select an app with off-line map mode to ensure that you are never left stranded without mobile coverage and it will save your battery life too.



HIKING SOLO

Is Hiking Solo for You?

Human's are social animals and most of us want nothing more than to be surrounded by others.

Believe it or not there are in fact a few of us (myself included) who prefer their own company and actually enjoy the solitude offered when you are by yourself. Being alone, hiking solo, on the trail is an amazing experience and one that I personally enjoy as well as being with others.

If the empty, open trail beckons you, then solo hiking might be what you're looking for.

I must preface this by saying that it is not recommended, by various authorities, that you hike alone for obvious reasons such as safety and survival. However, deciding to hike solo or not is completely your decision to make and a decision you should not take lightly. Whether you go out alone, with a couple of friends, or with a large group there are potential consequences with which you need to prepare for.

Read my tips at
www.trailhiking.com.au/hiking-solo/

There are a lot of perfectly good reasons to 'go solo':

- Spiritual well-being and self awareness
- Improved outdoor and navigation skills
- Ability to set your own pace
- Flexibility of route and timing
- Personal challenge
- Helps to face and overcome fears
- Experience nature
- Reward through accomplishment

If you plan to go it alone I have prepared a few tips that should help to reduce the risk of anything not going to plan.

Check them out at
www.trailhiking.com.au/hiking-solo



HIKING WITH FRIENDS HIKING WITH A GROUP

Hike in a group where possible.

It is a good idea to always have at least one other person with you if you are going on low-traffic trails. This may not always be possible for a number of reasons so if hiking solo, be prepared with navigation tools, medical supplies, shelter etc.

There are a lot of benefits to hiking in a group. Some of these include:

- Learning from more experienced hikers or pass on your knowledge to others sharing your hike
- Improve your navigation skills including reading terrain, trail markers, map and compass use
- Distributing loads across the group, particularly on day and multi-day hikes
- Social benefits. Humans are social creatures
- Assistance in case of injury

PLANNING TIP

Plan your hike for the slowest person. One that is suitable for everyone in your party and let the slower person set the pace. There is nothing more frustrating and potentially dangerous than a slow hiker falling behind the group.

Do your kids hear the call of the great outdoors?

www.trailhiking.com.au/overnight-hiking-kids

I used to hike a lot without my kids as I was fearful that they would not be ready or enjoy the experience. To me that would have been devastating as I really wanted them to enjoy hiking as much as me. Whether you have toddlers, young children or pre-teens, it is, with some planning and preparation, possible to answer the call with kids in tow.

Smart Planning

1. Start Small

When overnight hiking with kids it is really important that you scale your adventure to suit your kids and to start them small. You may be into peak-bagging and challenging alpine hikes and can't wait to introduce your kids to the wonders of the high country wilderness, but make yourself start small and build as they are not going to be able to handle as much as you are.

2. Distance

Kids wearing packs do much better hiking over distance than they do with elevations. A few flat kilometres are much easier than half a kilometre of switchbacks or steep ascents. Plan your daily distance based on age. The rule of thumb I use is that kids can easily cover 1 kilometre of trail for every year of their age. So an eight year old should easily be able to hike 8-10km in a day. It is a rule of thumb and you will know your child's stamina better than anyone, just don't let them fool you.



3. Terrain

I always try to ensure that the terrain is varied with rocks, logs and uneven surfaces. There is nothing more boring for kids than walking along a well graded path and you will hear them asking 'how much further' about five minutes into the hike.

4. Set the pace

Slowing down the pace on the trail to keep the kids engaged with animal tracks, plant identification, photo-taking, frequent snacks, exploring rocks and caves etc. can pay huge dividends. This will keep them interested and stop them from feeling like they are hiking for hours on end.

5. Know when to quit

It helps to be flexible and know when to quit; if you're on day three of living in a tent in the rain, there's no shame in retreating to a motel. The last thing you want to do is stick it out and make it a horrible experience.

Read more about preparation and gear at www.trailhiking.com.au/overnight-hiking-kids/

7 PRINCIPLES LEAVE NO TRACE

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES ARE THE BEDROCK OF THE LEAVE NO TRACE PROGRAM

They provide guidance to enjoy our natural world in a sustainable way that avoids human-created impacts. The principles have been adapted to they can be applied in your backyard or your back-country.

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups when possible. Consider splitting larger groups into smaller groups.
- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.
- In popular areas:
 - Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
 - Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
 - Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.
- In pristine areas:
 - Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
 - Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

3. Dispose of Waste Properly

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food and litter.
- Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep, at least 200 feet from water, camp and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap.
- Scatter strained dishwater.

4. Leave What You Find

- Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

5. Minimize Campfire Impacts

- Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the back-country. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.
- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
- Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes

6. Respect Wildlife

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviours, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

7. Be Considerate of Your Hosts and Other Visitors

- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.
- Consider the rights of traditional land owners.

DID YOU KNOW?

Trail Hiking Australia is not a commercial initiative. I have personally funded and developed the website and eBooks and offer them FREE for the outdoor community.

Kind of my way of giving back.


Any support you can offer will be greatly appreciated. I would love to receive new hiking trails, tips, articles or financial donations; all which will help further develop these tools for you.

Darren Edwards



www.lnt.org.au

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The Leave No Trace Centre for Outdoor Ethics



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Trail Hiking Australia
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Our mission is to enhance your events by providing the tools to create meaningful connections.

We understand that event planning requires a budget conscious approach with effective time management strategies as they are often steered by volunteers and committees.

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