

Minimal Impact Bushwalking

More people each year are visiting the outdoors. This means these areas need to be looked after for future generations to have the same opportunities to enjoy such experiences. Below are a few ways we can all help to preserve the bush we love.

Respect the enjoyment of others. Be considerate of others in your group and other walkers as they too have come to enjoy the bush. For many this means enjoying the peace and quiet the bush has to offer.

Group Size. The maximum number in a group should be based on the sensitivity of the area to be visited, the condition of and impact on the tracks, the length of the walk, the season/weather, available campsites. Suggested limits are:
sensitive/alpine areas - maximum 10; other parks/reserves/walk areas - maximum 20

Stay on the track. Keeping to established tracks where possible and not cutting corners minimizes damage. Avoid walking on sensitive vegetation if possible. In open, untracked country spread out to disperse the damage. A plant stepped on only once has a much better chance of survival than if it is trampled by the whole party. Route planning should try to avoid sensitive vegetation and cultural areas.

Carry out all rubbish. If you can carry it in you can carry it out. Leave excess packaging at home. Don't burn or bury rubbish as animals are likely to dig it up and scatter it. Rubbish left behind is unsightly as it does not belong in the bush and may take years to break down. Here is a list of decomposition times for some items:

Faeces:	2 weeks
Cotton rag:	1-5 months
Food:	2 months
Orange peel:	2 years
Cigarette:	5 years
Plastic bag:	30 years
Tin can:	100 years
Aluminium can:	200-500 years
Foil:	indefinitely

Minimise spreading disease such as Phytophthora. Phytophthora (dieback) is a soil borne disease which can be spread by bushwalkers. Avoid areas of Phytophthora if possible. Thoroughly clean boots, tents, groundsheets and even vehicle tyres after (and during if indicated) a trip.

Take care of huts. Leave them clean and tidy for the next visitors. Be careful with fires in huts. Several huts have been lost because of accidents with fire or stoves. Don't leave food as it encourages rats.

If there is a toilet use it. If not bury faecal waste at least 15cm (6 inches) deep and at least 100m away from watercourses and campsites. In the snow be sure to dig down into the soil. Consider using unbleached, undyed toilet paper which breaks down more quickly than those containing dyes.

Fires. Observe fuel stove only areas. Observe any fire lighting restrictions. Keep the fire small and if possible use an existing fireplace. Use only dead or fallen timber. Be absolutely sure the fire is out before you leave. Put it out with water not soil. In peat areas fires can smoulder underground for months.

Water. Don't put food wastes or wash-up water in stream or lakes. Detergent, toothpaste and soap harm fish and other waterlife. Wash at least 50 meters from streams and lakes and scatter the water when finished. Soap is not necessary for dishes, use a scourer.

Campsites. Use existing sites if possible. Camp on hard or sandy ground where it will cause less damage than on boggy or lush vegetated ground. Digging trenches around tents should be unnecessary. Always leave your campsites in better condition than you found them even if this means carrying out other people's rubbish.