



INTRODUCTION TO OVERNIGHT BUSHWALKING

WELCOME TO OVERNIGHT BUSHWALKING

It actually doesn't mean walking during the night! - it means walking for more than one day at a time and camping out. If you haven't done more than day walks as yet, it will usually mean starting with a weekend walk. This Information Sheet is designed to make your first overnight walk (and many others to follow) as easy and as much fun as possible.

If you haven't done any base camps yet (camping in one place and doing day walks from there) you may wish to do one or more of those first. As well as being fun in themselves, they are a good intermediary stage between day and overnight walks.

This introduction will cover -

- benefits
- fitness
- equipment
- weight
- food
- responsibilities

BENEFITS

Overnight walks allow you to fully experience the wonders of the bush. Instead of heading back to town in your vehicle you can relax and more fully soak up your environment.

They allow you to get to places that you otherwise couldn't get to. There is only so far you can go on a day walk, but on a multi-day walk you can get to all sorts of wonderful places.

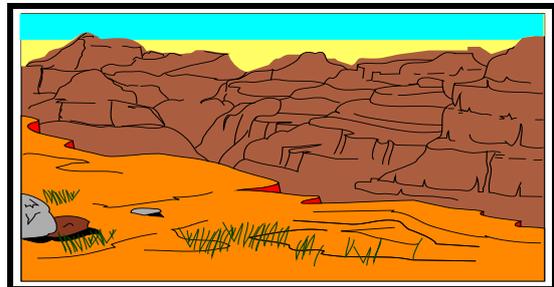
Overnight walking is also a stronger social experience. The bonds that you can make spending several days walking with other people can be very rewarding.

And of course a weekend (or longer) away is an enjoyable and refreshing way to get away from it all!

FITNESS

You do not have to be extremely fit to happily do overnight walks. If you get a reasonable amount of exercise regularly, you will be fine. If you normally do the club's medium day walks, you should have no problems with most overnight walks.

A medium grade overnight walk will normally be shorter each day than a medium day walk, but with a heavier pack. This will be no problem if you have your pack fitted properly, and you don't overload yourself. (See Equipment).



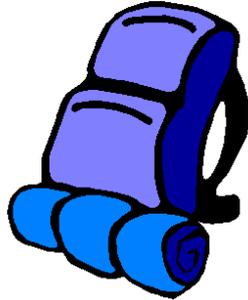
If you wanted to you could practice by carrying some extra weight on a day walk (although this may be all on your shoulders depending on your day pack). Some extra walks or other exercise would also help.

EQUIPMENT

Before you buy any equipment research it first. Ask club members; read surveys (eg. see Wild Magazines); ask sales assistants; hire club or other equipment to try it out. Good equipment will generally cost a little more but is better value. Equipment can often be bought more cheaply by mail order on-line

from within Australia and from overseas particularly the United States.

Backpack Find one that fits properly. It should not be too big or small for you and should sit properly on your hips. Carrying the weight on your hips means that your skeleton and not your muscles will be taking the load, and that means a great deal by the end of the day.



Most packs have a rigid frame but this adds to their weight. There are also some much lighter frameless packs (e.g. the Go-Lite brand) which have proven to be quite suitable. Borrow a pack from the Club and see what suits you.

Also make sure that the volume of your pack will be enough to carry the things that you will need for your likely longest walk.

Note that back packs are rarely 100% waterproof, so put your essentials in plastic bags (garbags are good) inside your pack, and/or get a pack cover.

Sleeping Bag. A very important item. Do not skimp on it. Get a bag rated for the worst conditions that you may walk in. It is easy to leave it open if too warm, but difficult to heat it up if too cold.

Any bag should be of box construction, not sewn through. The more boxes the less the filling will move around. It should have a flap over the zip, and a hood with draw-string. The zip should be the full length of the bag so that you can unzip it if too warm.

An inner sleeping sheet is highly recommended for keeping your bag clean, and enabling it to last much longer. Silk ones are very light and warm. A stuff sack with compression straps will keep the volume of the bag down when it is in your pack,

although always keep the bag open at home, to prevent the down staying compressed.

Sleeping Mat. To keep you off the ground for comfort and for temperature. The foam ones are light and work, but the self-inflating ones, although heavier, are generally more comfortable. The smaller, thin ones squeeze up quite small. There are also some very lightweight non-self inflating air mattresses with insulating properties that are suitable for 3 season use.

Stove. You can of course eat cold food, or even use a fire. But there are places and times where fires are banned, and they are also not as convenient as a stove. Having one is strongly recommended.

There are essentially three kinds - gas cylinder, methylated spirits (metho), and Shellite. Each type has its pros and cons, once again you can hire stoves from the club.

The difference between them is the fuel that they burn. Gas cylinders are the easiest to use and are very light but the fuel is the most expensive. Metho is generally easy to light, and burns mildly although quite effectively. Shellite stoves take longer to light as you have to heat up the fuel first, but once going heat very efficiently. They create more heat for a given amount of fuel and for this reason tend to be favoured for longer or alpine trips.

Footwear. Shoes should be comfortable, sturdy and have a good gripping rubber sole. Light footwear is less tiring, so avoid heavy boots that can take a long time to wear in. Some people prefer boots, especially if they have suspect ankles. There are plenty of good lightweight boots available. Others prefer low cut walking shoes. Many people walk very happily in cross trainers or joggers.

Tents. There is generally no such thing as the perfect tent, although there is a great



range. Good ones are expensive so it is worth checking out the range first. A very good way to do this is to hire a club (or other) tent and try it out. Also talk to others and check theirs out while on a trip.

There is such a range of options that it can be difficult to decide what to get. Essentially the choices depend on - what size tent you need; what conditions you are likely to use it in; what weight you are prepared to carry; and how much you are prepared to pay. This is one item that you probably need to take your time selecting.

You can hire all of these items from the club at very low rates.

Otherwise the equipment you need is pretty much as for a day walk. A basic list follows -

- All normal day walk gear
- the above equipment
- Good raingear
- Water carrier (eg. wine bladder)
- LED headtorch with fresh batteries
- adequate first aid kit
- cooking utensils
- plate, cup, spoon
- dish scourer
- matches, gas lighter or lint
- spare underwear
- thermals, long pants jumper, beanie & gloves for night
- toothbrush and paste, toiletries

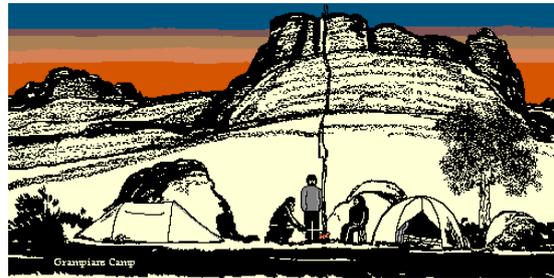
WEIGHT

One of the main concerns for first-time overnight walkers is carrying all that extra weight. As indicated above, you don't have to be super-fit, but it does help if your pack fits properly, and if you keep the weight to a minimum. Here are some tips.

Start by keeping all the extras out. You don't need a book, pack of cards, extra shirt, camera, etc. All those things can wait until you have had some practice and know just how much you can carry comfortably.

Keep the items you do carry light. For instance, carry a light, wool jumper instead of a heavy one. Use a lightweight tent. Use a small stove instead of a full-size one. Take dehydrated food (see FOOD below). Take a chux instead of a towel. Use a small torch. You can save several kilograms if you do this type of thing.

Measure things out. Take only as much food as you need, plus a little for emergencies. Take only as much fuel as you need.



Share with someone. Half a larger tent is lighter than a whole small one. You can also share the stove and fuel.

Put things in plastic bags (the snap-lock ones are good). Don't put things in plastic containers, and definitely do not use glass jars.

Put spare clothes into a stuff-sack or your jumper, to make a pillow at night, rather than carry a pillow. Light weight digital cameras are ideal, water and shock proof ones are now available.

If you observe the above, and with a bit of common sense, you can carry all you need while still keeping your weight right down. A rule of thumb is to carry one quarter of your body weight at most, however for a two-day walk you should aim to carry no more than 12-14 kilograms, but you should aim for less!.

FOOD

There is a huge range of foods available for bushwalking. The following is a beginner's guide only and you will probably find that

planning your food becomes an endless source of possibilities.

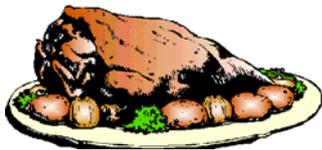
Fresh food is of course great but is also heavy. You can easily do without fresh food for a couple of days and still eat well. There is a reasonably good variety of dehydrated meals available in the supermarkets these days that will keep you going, although these can also have preservatives and other additives.

If you want to you can add light-weight vegetables to these packaged foods, such as capsicum, small tomatoes, celery, squash, etc. etc. Many people end up dehydrating their own favourite meals. You can hire a dehydrator from the club.

For breakfast you can have almost anything you want, but consider powdered milk. Some cereals also take up space so try muesli. For lunches consider biscuits, jams, cheese, dips, breads, almost anything really.

Also take along some items to nibble on such as dried fruit, nuts, and chocolate. A bushwalking favourite is a mixture of all your favourite nibbles, and is generally called Scroggin. Take a very small amount of tea or coffee, in a small film cannister. Take a cup-a-soup (or two).

If you measure out each meal carefully you will have sufficient to eat while keeping the weight down. As a general guide most bushwalkers take about 700 to 800 grams of dehydrated and fresh food for each full day.

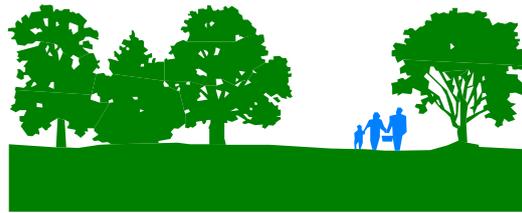


RESPONSIBILITIES

On a club walk you are not with paid guides whose responsibility it is to look after your every need. Club walks require a certain amount of individual responsibility from everyone. You should ensure that you are fit,

and have proper equipment. You should also work in with the leader and other party members to ensure a safe and enjoyable venture.

The leader is generally responsible for the organisation of the walk, including timings and navigation. However, a walk works best when each member contributes to it, looking after themselves and each other, and helping the leader whenever they can.



OTHER

Don't forget basic hygiene. Wash regularly and avoid any infections. Observe basic rules.

Don't ever be afraid to ask others for advice and opinions. Bushwalkers generally enjoy talking about their experiences, you will learn faster. It also makes for some interesting discussions!

On an overnight walk take your valuables rather than leave them in the car, although take the basics. Eg, your notes and credit cards but leave the empty wallet.

Any fires are to be kept to a minimum size, no rubbish is to be burnt, only dead wood should be used for firewood, and fires are to be completely extinguished before retiring or leaving the campsite. Remember you must comply with local and CFA fire restrictions

Don't pollute streams with shampoo, soap, detergent or food waste. Ensure washing is done away from any stream, lake, etc.

After each trip look after your gear. Clean, air, and fix it as soon as you can. Then check it again before you next go away.

Good Luck and have fun!