



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 (two-day) walk, like the club's beginners' pack carry. 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
- safety

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.

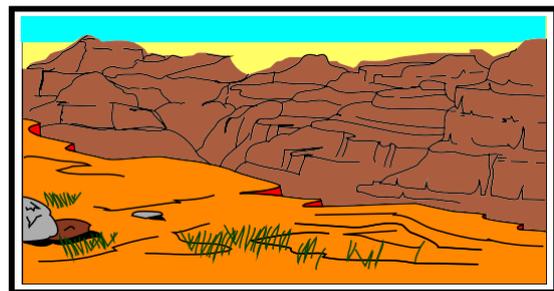
They allow you to get to places that you otherwise couldn't get to. There is only so far you can go on a day walk, but on a multi-day - even a two-day - walk you can get to all sorts of wonderful places.

Overnight walking is also a stronger social experience. The bonds that you can make spending two or more 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 and easy/medium day walks, you should have no problems starting with two-day overnight walks like the club's beginners' pack carry.

Medium or easy/medium grade overnight walks will normally be a shorter walk each day than for medium or easy/medium day walks, but include carrying 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 (including higher grade walks) or other exercise would also help.

EQUIPMENT

Before you buy any equipment, research it first. Ask club members; read surveys (eg. cleverhiker.com; outdoorgearlab.com); 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 which have proven to be quite suitable.

You can hire gear from the club at reasonable prices. 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 backpacks are rarely 100% waterproof under all outdoor conditions; for example, when carried during ongoing rain, or when placed on wet, damp ground. So put your essentials in plastic bags or a large pack liner, or use a few stuff-sacks and then store inside your backpack, 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,

Always keep the sleeping bag open (fully lofted) 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 to walk in, and, when new, can take a less time to wear in compared to heavy boots. 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 trail runners or joggers.

Tents. There is generally no such thing as the perfect tent, although there is a great range. Good ones are often 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 (subject to weather forecast):

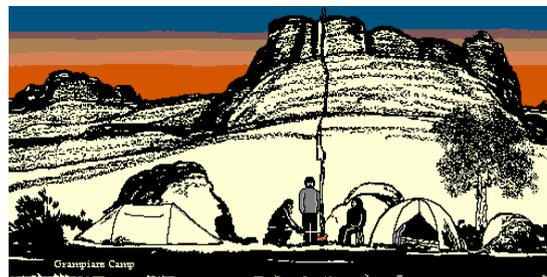
- all normal day walk gear
- your mobile phone – may be a battery pack if you plan to use it a lot
- the above equipment
- good raingear, including overpants
- water carrier with an easy to access filling port
- LED headtorch with fresh batteries
- adequate first aid kit for the trip, and any personal medicines
- cooking utensils - kept to a minimum
- plate, cup, spoon
- dish scourer - cut down in size

- matches, gas lighter or lint - depending on your stove burner type
- spare underwear - you don't need too many spare clothes
- thermals, long pants, jumper, beanie and gloves - for evening/night/sleep
- toothbrush and paste, toiletries
- sealable plastic bag – to store and carry out your garbage

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 lightweight 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, or similar, instead of a towel. Use a small torch. You can save several kilograms if you do this type of thing.

Other ideas to keep items light:

- Measure things out. Take only as much food as you need, plus some extra for emergencies. Take only as much fuel as you need.

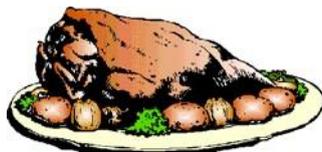
- Share with someone. Half a larger tent is lighter than a whole small one. You can also share the stove and fuel.
- Put things in plastic bags (snap-lock ones are good). Don't put things in plastic or metal containers, and definitely do not use glass jars.
- Put spare clothes into a stuff-sack, or place them in your jumper, to make a pillow at night (no need to carry a separate pillow).
- Lightweight 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 to 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 and camping stores that will keep you going, although these can also have preservatives and other additives. If you want to you can add lightweight vegetables to these packaged foods, such as capsicum, small tomatoes, celery, squash, etc.

Many people find ways to dehydrate their own favourite meals. You can hire a dehydrator from the club. YouTube has many ideas, tips and tricks for successful dehydration of meals. Also ask club members about what works well for them.

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/crackers, bread, jams, cheese, dips (even dips can be dehydrated!), 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 sealable plastic bag. Take an instant soup (or two).

If you measure out each meal carefully you will have sufficient to eat while keeping the daily pack 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 for all.

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.

SAFETY AND 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, and 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 cash 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.
- Your base weight should be 8 to 9 kilograms, or less; which is everything you are carrying on your back (includes the pack) less water (usually a minimum 1 - 1.5 litres) and food.
- Follow the leader's guidance for each walk, like how much water to initially carry. This is specific to each walk due to the time of year, the weather and walk area, etc. They will inform how, when and where water is expected to be sourced, or will be made available.
- Load the "Emergency Plus" and "VicEmergency" applications onto your mobile phone. Check for any Fire Bans, Weather Warnings and the Temperatures for the area you will be walking in – do this before leaving home and before setting out on the overnight walk.
- Tell your emergency contact where you are going, and about the club's Emergency Contact System – see information sheet on Members' Area of the club's website :
(https://mbw.org.au/downloads/Guideline_ECS_Members_Basics_10-2015.pdf).

Good luck and have fun!

