



**MINIMUM IMPACT
CAMPING**

GUIDELINES

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No doubt you will have experienced the disappointment of coming across the evidence of previous human visitation in an otherwise pristine wilderness area. The remnants of past campfires, discarded tins, broken bottles or plastic wrappings and scraps of toilet paper, all evidence of others thoughtless behaviour in the natural environment. We intend that all camping undertaken by SEG groups will adhere to the following guidelines for minimum impact camping.

These guidelines have been taken from a document entitled "An Environmental Code for the Bush: Minimum Impact Camping Guidelines for Outdoor Education", prepared by Keith McRae of the Canberra College of Advanced Education in November 1986.

1 UNDERSTANDING

- a) All members of the group should be made aware of the basic techniques and requirements for minimum impact camping prior to the trip.
- b) The basic principle for minimum impact camping is to consider whether a party of visitors travelling several days behind you would notice the impacts you have made. Ideally of course, they should not be able to detect any impacts due to your presence.

2 TRAVELLING IN THE WILDERNESS ENVIRONMENT

- a) Follow wildlife or other tracks wherever possible, as this causes less damage to plants than if people 'bash' their way through the bush. This is particularly relevant for movement on the plateau.
- b) Tread carefully, and if possible, walk on boulders and stony ground rather than soil and ground lichens.
- c) Consider carefully the environmental implications of walking in areas which have no previously used tracks (this is most of the project area), and be aware of the effect of such walking. Movement in these areas requires special care, particularly with respect to the vegetation and soil cover.
- d) Eliminate all unnecessary or loud noise whenever travelling in the wilderness environment.

3 CAMPSITES

- a) Campsites should be located at least 30 metres away from natural water courses if possible, and avoid areas which are frequently visited by wildlife. Water courses need to be protected from pollution and wildlife must have unthreatened access to water.

- b) Avoid tall trees, high knolls and cliff bottoms when selecting campsites, as these present a threat to personal safety.
- c) Choose a site which will not be scarred by the activities of campers.
- d) Avoid areas of fragile vegetation which can be easily trampled, or slopes on which erosion is likely, or wet sites on which there is likely to be soil and vegetation compaction.
- e) Pitch tents in areas where there is plenty of organic material or in sandy areas if present as this will cause less damage.
- f) Use an existing campsite rather than make a new one in the same area providing that the area is not in danger of being heavily compacted. In either situation, campers should spread out around the area to avoid soil or vegetation compaction resulting from a concentration of activities in a confined area. They should, at the same time, try to avoid expanding the campsite.
- g) Do not dig ditches around tents, especially in delicate areas, as this causes unnecessary damage to plants and surface soil conditions. Use natural drainage and tents with inbuilt groundsheets.
- h) Do not use rocks or dig up soil or sod to hold pegs or tent flaps. Do not landscape the campsite by cutting live branches, removing rocks or pulling up plants. If sleeping areas need to be cleared of twigs or small rocks, scatter these items back over the area before leaving. Scatter all rocks used as "furniture".
- i) Select and set up the chosen campsite as early as possible, to minimise the sort of unintentional damage which can be caused by people stumbling about in the dark.
- j) Avoid spending more than two days at any one campsite unless it is an already established site. Even then, be conscientious about moving the campsite to avoid damage. In areas which have never previously been used, it may be desirable to limit stays to one night.
- k) These guidelines impose limits on the potential location of campsites in the project area. In particular, campsites should not be set up in the mallee areas of the plateau. Some locations in Arcoona Creek will be suitable, but campsites should never be situated close to waterholes, either wet or dry.

4 FIRES AND FIREWOOD

- a) All cooking on SEG expeditions to the project area will be with fuel stoves. This is necessary for half of the year due to regulations, and will avoid unnecessary use of dead timber during the remainder of the year. Burning wood interrupts the natural cycle in which nutrients taken from the soil are returned by the decay processes and may remove or limit the habitat for many animals, insects and birds.

- b) Fires should only be lit in emergency situations when warmth, heating of food or signalling is absolutely necessary. The following guidelines are given only for such an emergency.
- c) Select a site which is away from decaying matter, tents, trees, branches, shrubs or underground root systems. If groundcover or forest litter exist, clear the area thoroughly and dig well into the mineral soil. Wetting vegetation in the vicinity of a fire should be considered, particularly in dry conditions.
- d) Avoid lighting a fire on a windy day when sparks might be dangerous.
- e) Do not ring fires with rocks or build them against reflecting rocks and do not waste firewood on unnecessarily large fires. Fires should be kept small, i.e. large enough only for important and immediate needs. It is much easier to cook on a small fire than on a large one.
- f) The firewood should be selected from small diameter wood lying loosely on the ground in order to ensure complete and efficient burning. Never cut live wood for fires. Burn all wood as completely as possible. Do not put anything that will not burn completely in the fire, particularly plastic or foil packaging.
- g) Attend the fire constantly. Put the fire out completely with water when it has burnt down as far as possible. Scatter widely as much of the cold, white ash as possible in order to avoid an unnatural concentration of minerals in the fireplace.
- h) Restore the fireplace area and leave as few traces as possible.

5 DISPOSAL OF HUMAN WASTE

- a) Dig individual 'cat-holes' with trowel or heel of boot in soil with a proportion of organic material if possible. Cat-holes should be located at least 50 m from water sources, walking and other tracks and the campsite. Litter and groundcovers should be carefully removed and a hole of 100-200 mm deep dug. As soil bacteria is the major decomposing agent, the faeces should be mixed with soil before the litter and groundcover is replaced.
- b) Use single-ply white toilet paper and then burn it if possible, watching carefully to ensure that the flames do not spread to dry litter or other flammable material around the cat-hole. If not possible to burn, bury it along with the waste.
- c) Urinate in humus areas well away from water sources, and avoid fragile vegetation. The salinity of urine can affect plant growth.
- d) Carry tampons out in a sealed bag. They do not burn or decompose effectively and should not be buried in a hole.

6 DISPOSAL OF RUBBISH

- a) Aim to carry as little rubbish-producing material as possible. Rubbish problems can be reduced by careful planning. Food should be repackaged in plastic bags or reusable containers.
- b) All rubbish is carried out. 'Rubbish' includes such items as orange or banana peel (which rot very slowly), paper products, plastic, tins, foil, chewing gum and other food scraps. Fires should not be seen as an opportunity to dispose of rubbish. (See section 4).
- c) Avoid burying food scraps, leaving them lying around, throwing them away or leaving them behind rocks or trees. All small scraps, including those left in pots and pans, should be treated like bulk leftovers and packed up and carried out. Food scraps will soon be recovered by small animals, and may contain organisms which are dangerous to them.
- d) Pick up and carry out rubbish as you come across it.
- e) Check all campsites immediately prior to departure to ensure that no litter is inadvertently left behind.

7 WASHING OF BODIES, CLOTHES AND UTENSILS

- a) Washing should be performed without soap or detergent wherever possible. If necessary, use soap, and wash at least 30 m from water sources. Even biodegradable soap is a stress on the environment, and so as much of the washing as possible should be done without soap.
- b) If plates or utensils are greasy, wipe with paper to remove as much as possible and then hot water wash.
- c) Do not swim in waterholes unless the water is flowing. Others may have to drink that water at a later date.

8 PROTECTION OF NATIVE PLANTS AND WILDLIFE

- a) The project area is in a National Park, and is thus subject to all of the usual regulations relating to protection of plants and animals.
- b) Resist the temptation to feed birds and animals which appear curious or hungry. Even in low-impact areas, the feeding of wildlife can have serious long-term effects on behaviour patterns.
- c) Respect the needs of birds and animals for undisturbed privacy. Observe animal behaviour, but do so with care, common-sense and restraint, and with a minimum of interference with the wildlife.
- d) Avoid damaging plants, particularly in fragile areas. It may take years to repair damage caused by just walking through such areas.
- e) Do not use natural materials for shelter except in emergency situations, and never cut down vegetation for unnecessary purposes such as furniture or bedding.

f) Try to avoid difficult and persistent 'bush-bashing' since this can cause considerable damage to plants. In the project area, this means being prepared to walk in a circuitous manner in places.

g) Avoid descending steep slopes if possible as a descent can cause more damage to soil and plants than an ascent.

h) Avoid wilfully damaging or destroying any living or non-living part of the natural community in which you are a member of a community charged with the responsibility for protecting all living things.

Remember, if all people who use wilderness areas follow these guidelines, there will be decreased environmental impact and damage, and increased protection of natural environments.

All the time in the Gammons expeditioners should be aware of the adage:

**TAKE NOTHING BUT
PHOTOGRAPHS –**

**LEAVE NOTHING BUT
FOOTSTEPS**