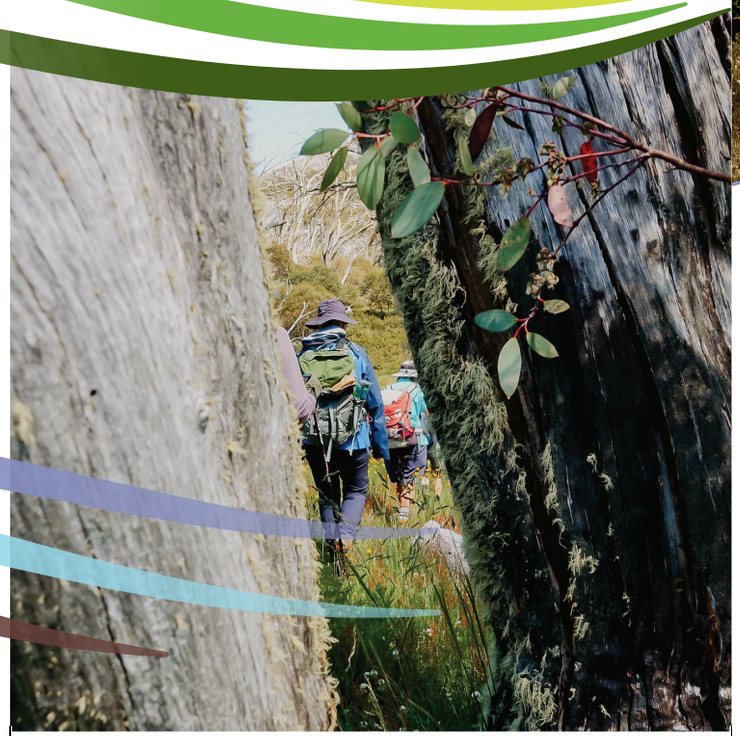
Bushwalking offers a unique opportunity to connect with nature and explore the stunning landscapes that Australia has to offer. However, with this privilege comes the responsibility to protect the environment we enjoy.

"Tread Softly" is a guide to help you minimise your impact on the natural environment, ensuring the beauty is there for future generations to experience.

This brochure outlines simple practices you can adopt to walk more lightly, reduce your environmental footprint, and contribute to the conservation of our precious ecosystems. Take the time to learn about the Traditional Custodians of the land you're visiting, and familiarise yourself with the area's guidelines to ensure you walk respectfully and responsibly.

Whether you're new to bushwalking or a seasoned explorer, we invite you to join us in preserving the pristine beauty of our natural heritage.



Bushwalking Victoria

Bushwalking Victoria is the peak body for bushwalkers and bushwalking clubs in Victoria, Australia.

Go to **www.bushwalkingvictoria.org.au** to find a club near you.

Tread Softly

Bushwalking Victoria

Tread softly to minimise your impact and protect nature when you're out bushwalking.

Keep your group small

Smaller groups place less pressure on tracks and campsites, reducing environmental impact. Be considerate of others and respect fellow bushwalkers.

Stay on the track

To prevent erosion and damage to sensitive vegetation keep to existing tracks where possible. Walking off-track or cutting corners harms the terrain and plant life. In open, untracked areas, spread out to minimise concentrated damage to the environment.

Use existing campsites

Whenever possible camp at designated sites or clearings with firm, level ground. Avoid trampling on sensitive vegetation and don't remove vegetation to create a campsite. Always leave campsites in the same or better condition than you found them.

Cook using a stove

Stoves are more eco-friendly than campfires as they don't rely on scarce wood supplies. They are also a more reliable and safer way to cook in varying weather conditions.

Minimise campfire use

Only light fires in permitted and designated fireplaces, and keep them small. If car-camping bring your own wood as fallen timber provides vital habitat and food for wildlife. Avoid campfires during hot or windy weather to reduce the risk of embers spreading. Always extinguish campfires thoroughly, ensuring ashes are cold using water rather than soil.

Leave no trace

Carry out all rubbish, including food scraps, and plan your trip to minimise waste. If possible, pick up any litter you find along the way.

Protect waterways

Water is a precious resource that can be contaminated by soaps, detergents, and personal care products. Clean utensils without soap, using sand, grass, or a scourer, and always wash at least 50 metres away from water sources. Scatter wastewater so that nature can filter it.

Dispose of waste properly

If no toilet is available, bury human waste at least 15 cm deep and 100 metres away from campsites, water, and tracks. Use a small shovel or trowel for digging. In snowy areas, dig through to soil. Always carry out toilet paper and sanitary products, by wrapping and placing in ziplock bags.

Respect wildlife and habitats

Avoid disturbing wildlife or disrupting their natural habitats, including rocks and fallen timber. Do not feed animals, as it may harm them or alter their behaviour. Don't collect plants or seeds. Use fallen timber for firewood only in an emergency.

Prevent the spread of disease

Stick to established tracks and campsites. Obey no entry signs for quarantined vegetation areas and use disease control stations when available. Carry a small brush to clean gear before moving to the next campsite. At home, wash and disinfect any clothing or equipment used in areas known to be contaminated.