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Make a Start!

Bushwalking - Why not make a start now?

Make a start... Join a Club?

The simplest and safest way to get started is to learn from the experience of others. Bushwalking clubs are an excellent source of experienced leaders and walking companions, as well as offering useful trip suggestions and advice. Clubs generally have walk programs publicized well in advance and welcome prospective members as visitors on walks. Some clubs also have equipment available for hire. There are many bushwalking clubs throughout Victoria and the Bushwalking Victoria office can help find one suitable for you. Read about bushwalking. There are many good books available on equipment, skills and places to go. Try your local library or one of the specialist shops for copies.

Work up to your aspirations

Start with easy trips. Do a couple of half-day or day walks fairly close to home, then longer day walks and short overnight trips. Start with walks in easy country, on well marked routes with up to date track notes and maps. If possible, walk in fine weather. A limited selection is listed in this brochure. Build up your experience gradually.

Get fit

Bushwalking is good exercise and is within the physical capabilities of most people. However, you'll do better and enjoy it more if you are fit before you go. The exercise you need is the kind that builds up your heart and circulatory system; walking, climbing stairs, swimming, cycling, jogging and, of course, lots of bushwalking.

Skills

If you are not walking with an experienced leader, obtain a map of the area and plan your route before starting. Try to estimate how long it will take and where you want to have lunch or camp. Someone in the party must be able to navigate. It is dangerous to go into the bush if you do not understand how to read a map. Many clubs will help members become proficient at navigation. The Outdoor Leisure Map series provides maps and information on bushwalking routes in popular areas. A list of map shops is included in this brochure. Know the elements of first aid and carry a basic first aid kit at all times. Enquire from Bushwalking Victoria about courses available in basic and advanced bushwalking skills and first aid.

Food and Water

Always start with a filled water bottle and suitable high energy food. In cool weather one litre of water during the day should be sufficient but you will need more on hot days. Foods that are easily digestible and provide energy to the body quickly are carbohydrates, such as bread, fresh or dried fruit, sweets and chocolate. For overnight trips, food should be lightweight and easily prepared.

Equipment

You don't need much equipment when starting, but choose it carefully and wisely. For day walks you need a small pack but if you wish to camp overnight you will personally need a good sleeping bag and backpack, whilst a tent and stove can be shared with others. These items can be borrowed or hired until you decide exactly what you need. Specialist shops and clubs can help with advice. The right clothing ensures you enjoy bushwalking in both comfort and safety. Your clothing is your first line of protection from the cold, the wind, the rain, the sun, insects, snakes and the scrub. A number of light, adjustable layers is preferable to a few layers of thick fabric. Good footwear means comfortable light boots or runners with a sound tread. Headwear is essential to provide shade from the sun or warmth from cold winds. A waterproof jacket is also essential. Choose one with a draw cord hood, long enough to sit on and NOT padded.

Let someone know

Before you go, let someone know where you are going and when you are expected back. Leave a copy of your intended route with a friend (or at least in your vehicle, such as on top of the sun visor). And let them know of your safe return.

Tread Softly

As advised in the Bushwalking Victoria minimum impact code. Protect our bush and water resources by walking in small parties, keeping to the track, carrying out all rubbish, cooking with a stove, following the sanitation guidelines and respecting the flora and fauna and the enjoyment of others.