
Willis's Walkabouts

Bushwalking Guide

The Essentials



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Walking Plan

Please read the trip notes for detailed information specific to any trip you are considering.

It is important that you consider if your level of fitness matches the trip you are considering. If in doubt- choose an easier trip. Many of our clients do not stop at one trip, they keep coming back for more. You may wish to start with something easy and then you can make a more accurate assessment as to how difficult a walk you can manage.

On average you can expect to walk between 4- 6 hours per day. Some trips will be less and some trips will be more. We will always do most of our pack walking in the morning and will sometimes get to camp by lunchtime. Whether or not we make it by lunch, we will try and arrive early enough so you have plenty of time for swimming, relaxing or exploring the area near camp.

ALL of our Australian trips require some amount of rock hopping. Sometimes this is easier than people expect, sometimes it is harder. The most reliable way to see how it is for you is to find some broken rock with individual rocks being at least 30-50cm in size. Fill up a hiking pack and spend some time walking across them. If you can't do that, try putting on a pack and stepping up and down off a chair or bench, no hands.

We can only ever walk at the pace of the slowest. On a few rare occasions, we have had people who walked so slowly that their pace was endangering the group. They were evacuated at their own expense. All our itineraries are designed so that we camp next to high quality water every night. When we cross from one creek to another, too slow a pace can create a risk that we won't make it to the next creek, let alone a decent campsite. Please consider your fitness and contact us if you are in doubt and would like to discuss this

Pre-trip Training

*People who do pre-trip training have a **MUCH MORE** enjoyable trip.*

Place some weight in your pack, find some rocks to clamber over and wear the shoes you intend to bring on the walk.

One 73 year old who had never carried a pack wore a full one, while walking his dog, for several weeks before the trip. He easily outwalked people half his age.



What to Bring

We provide the dinners and cooking equipment. The weight of this is shared among the group. Weigh your pack before adding anything else. Allow for 2-3kg in group weight (depending on the length of each section or your trip).

In your pack.

- The pack itself
- Shelter eg mozzie dome/ tent
- Something to sleep on eg thermarest/ air bed/ foam mat
- Sleeping bag and/or liner
- Eating utensils- spoon, bowl, mug
- Two one litre water bottles or the equivalent
- Head torch
- Trowel
- Personal first aid
- Breakfast, lunch and snacks

On your body.

- Boots or shoes with excellent grip
- A long sleeved cotton shirt with a collar.
- Quick dry, loose fitting, long pants or shorts and gaiters
- Socks and underwear
- A broad brimmed hat

NOTHING ELSE IS ESSENTIAL

More details about the Essentials and also **useful additional items** are in our more comprehensive Bushwalking Guide. We highly recommend everyone reads this to help them prepare and make the most out of their trip.

Food

Willis Walkabouts provides your evening meals. The meal has a carbohydrate base ie pasta, noodles, rice. All meals will also contain substantial amounts of recently dehydrated vegetables. Many will contain fish or meat. These can be omitted for vegetarians.

We dehydrate the vast majority of our vegetables and meat ourselves to ensure it is high quality and for variety. Almost all dietary requirements can be catered for. Please consider this carefully as once requested and food has been prepared you cannot change your mind out on the trip.



On most trips we will light a fire in the morning and evening. On some trips we will need to use a fuel stove. Please look at the trip notes for the trip you are considering to see which will be the case on your trip. When we are lighting a fire there will always be hot water available in the morning, late afternoon and after dinner. When we are using fuel we will always have hot water available in the morning and late afternoon.

PLEASE READ our more comprehensive Bushwalking Guide for lots of suggestions and ideas to help you prepare delicious breakfast, lunch and snacks for tropical conditions.



Transportation

Although all our trips are walking trips, we often have to travel long distances to get to the remote areas we enjoy walking in.

Where possible we use 4WD to reach the place where our walk starts. Sometimes there is not even a track leading up to the walk and we require light aircraft or a boat to reach the area we are walking in. Even if a vehicle can take us to the start of the walk, once we are there, there is no track. We are walking in off-track, remote nature.

Please check the trip notes for your trip to see what transport is used to get to the area you will be walking in.

Transportation... continued

VEHICLE TRANSPORT

A three hour drive to get to a walking area is a short one. On a few trips, you have to drive for two days before reaching the destined area. Most of our vehicles are registered as self drive hire cars. This helps keep costs down and allows our clients to share in the driving if they wish to do so and ensures that no guide will feel it necessary to continue driving when he or she feels tired. Where we use our self-drive hire cars, you may be able to provide your own transport and get a discount. Ask us for details if you are interested in this option.



LIGHT AIRCRAFT

Sometimes the only way to access an area is in light aircraft. Weight is always important when you are hiking. In light aircraft it also becomes important to the entire group. If you are travelling in light aircraft we need an accurate estimate of you and your pack weight as soon as possible.

Please note gas canisters can not be taken in any aircraft, fixed wing or helicopter. The areas we get to by helicopter are predominantly areas where we have a cooking fire. The Bungle Bungles are an exception. In this situation we carry shellite instead of gas canisters.



For more information, please refer to the Comprehensive version of our Bushwalking Guide and the trip notes specific to the trip you are interested in.

Travel Connections and Pick Ups

- Unless otherwise stated, transportation on all complete trips is from and to Darwin, Kununurra, Alice Springs or Tom Price
- Except where we use chartered transport, those doing part trips have to find their own way to and/or from our connection points, all of which have regular bus services.
- Never schedule connections on the same day that a trip or section begins or ends without contacting us first.
- There is an important pre-trip meeting the evening before departure for all trips. See the trip notes for details.
- Trips normally depart about between 7 and 8 a.m. in the NT, earlier in WA, and return in the late afternoon. The final pick up time will be worked out at the pre-trip meeting the night before departure.

For more information, please refer to the Comprehensive version of our Bushwalking Guide and the trip notes specific to the trip you are interested in.

Swimming

The majority of our trips include plenty of time swimming in pristine waterholes. Because we are an off-track bushwalking company we will usually have these waterholes and waterfalls all to ourselves. Regular swims are an important part of any trip both for enjoyment and also for safety. In a hot, humid climate it helps regulate the body temperature. We encourage people to swim often and it is not hard when there are so many stunning places to swim.

SWIMMING ATTIRE

On our trips some people preference wearing something in the water and some people preference swimming naked. In public places you will need to wear something in the water however during the trip you will be in remote areas and can choose what is most comfortable for you. Swimming naked enables people to hop in and out of the water without needing to change or alternatively walking in wet underwear/bather bottoms which can cause chaffing. Whatever you choose we ask that you are respectful of other people's choice.



Personal Hygiene

Except in some popular areas accessible by vehicle, almost all of the water you encounter is unpolluted enough to drink without treatment. It is pristine. It is important to keep it that way.

Do not scrape uneaten food into the water – bury it or burn it. NEVER use soap or shampoo in the water. Unless you have some sort of chronic skin complaint, neither soap nor shampoo is ever necessary. Those few people who do need to use soap or shampoo should fill a billy with water and do their soaping and rinsing well away from water supplies.

Bush toileting

When we visit these magnificent places excrement, toilet paper and footprints are the only things we leave behind. So we want to make sure that we are toileting in the best possible way to care for these places.

Bush pees- if you wish to use toilet paper you will need to collect it in a bag and burn it or carry it out.

Bush 'Number two's'- You will need to walk at least 100m away from the creek, or water line. If you are walking in the dry season ask your guide how high the water level goes in the wet season and **walk at least 100 m away from this point. You need to dig a hole deep enough to sufficiently cover your poo and toilet paper.** Some people choose to use a water squirt bottle or leaves instead of toilet paper. You can also reduce your paper usage with the use of natural materials such as suitable leaves or small stones before a final cleanup with paper. Toilet paper takes significantly longer than faeces to break down. Faeces should always be buried about 15 cm (6 inches), deep enough so that it cannot attract flies. This aspect of behaviour in the bush is vital.

If you are not willing to make the effort to dispose of your wastes properly, do not consider coming on any Walkabout.

A trowel is an essential part of your hiking kit. In many places where we camp the land is rocky and difficult to dig in. You will need a tool to support you digging a decent hole to ensure excrement is buried.

Personal Hygiene... continued

Menstruation

Used tampons and sanitary napkins should be carried out, **not buried**. If buried, a goanna or other animal is likely to dig them up, attempt to eat them and choke to death. This has happened before!

There have been some recent advances in moon cups. This is the easiest environmentally friendly bush option. Washable napkins are another option. If you are using washable napkins please bring a bag you can use to carry water away from the creek to wash them in.

You can also contact our office for a specific information sheet on environmentally sound practises and alternatives.

Santitation

No one wants an upset tummy, let alone in the bush where you need to walk 100m and dig a hole every time the urge hits you. Good personal hygiene is important and easy. **We do not use any soaps or detergents in the bush** to protect this pristine water. There are many plants with anti-bacterial properties. Alternatively, a good scrub with sand or charcoal works well too.

Minimal Impact

Dishes

We do not leave any food scraps in the bush. All food scraps are burnt or buried. If you scrub your bowl and the pots with sand you can put this sand in the fire to burn your scraps then take water from the creek to wash your bowl and discard the used water up on the creek bank away from the creek.

Rubbish

You can burn paper. All other rubbish must be carried out with you. Be aware there are many packages that look like paper but have a foil lining. Foil lined papers do not normally disintegrate completely in a camp fire. Small pieces of burnt foil have proven attractive to small birds which eat them. Eating small bits of foil often results in a slow and lingering death. Please carry out all foil.

Smoking

We rarely have smokers on trips but...if you are a smoker, carry a small bag or tin for your cigarette butts and used matches as you will need to carry out any filters. Smokers should be aware that many people object to cigarette smoke and need to ensure that they are willing to walk away from the group and be downwind of others. Heavy smokers who don't exercise regularly are unlikely to have the necessary stamina to do many of the trips.

Danger and Accidents

Accidents are probably no more likely in the bush than in the home. Their consequences, however, can be much more serious.

If you were to have an accident requiring medical aid, it may be a day or more before you can be brought to it. On the longer, more adventurous trips, it might be several days. If you were physically capable of moving yourself, it is likely that you would have to walk to the nearest point from which an evacuation could practically be made. All guides have remote first aid training, but none is a medical practitioner.

Mobile phones do not work in the areas where we operate. We carry satellite phones and an EPIRB on all trips. While they are usually very reliable there is no way to guarantee that they will work when needed. Atmospheric conditions can sometimes disrupt communications for days at a time. Even if we were able to establish immediate contact with the appropriate authorities, it might still be a day before help could arrive. **If you have an accident that is serious enough to require immediate hospitalisation to save your life, you will die.** This is, of course, just as true on most country roads throughout Australia as it is off on a bushwalk.

The way to minimise the possibility of accidents is to take care at all times. Although a pack which is too heavy can cause dangerous overbalancing, almost all of those accidents which have occurred on Walkabouts trips have occurred at campsites or lunch spots when the individual concerned was not wearing a pack and did not take due care. You can avoid accidents but only if you are careful at all times.

Danger and Accidents... continued

Finally, you must consider the possibility that the sole guide in a small group could become incapacitated.

The guide will always go over the route on the maps for anyone who is interested and who understands how to use them so that at least some of the group are familiar with where they are and the shortest route for assistance. The guide will also demonstrate how to use the satellite phone and PLB and has all emergency numbers with the satellite phone.

It is most unlikely that the guide will become incapacitated, nonetheless, you need to consider the small possibility that you could find yourself in a wilderness with no guide.

Essential Reading

Anyone who has read this and who then decides that they do not wish to participate in the trip for which they registered will have their money refunded in full provided that such a decision is made within 7 days of receiving this booklet.

This is a simplified version of our more comprehensive Bushwalking Guide. You **MUST** read this before coming on one of our trips.

It is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** you also read the more comprehensive version to ensure you are well prepared and make the most out of this unique and memorable experience.
