

Equipment for Walks

This is a general guide to assist new walkers. There is always a range of views amongst experienced walkers about equipment but it is essential that:

- you are comfortable in the expected conditions, particularly with regard to your feet and a not too heavy pack
- you are prepared for survival in extremes of weather conditions, accidents and emergencies
- you are self-sufficient, in case you are separated from the rest of the party.

What to take on day walks

Day pack To carry your gear while leaving your hands free; you will probably become tired if you carry gear by hand or over one shoulder.

Water bottle Plastic or aluminium. Pack it so you won't be crushed against it if you fall.

Food For example, sandwiches, muesli bars, sweets, fruit that does not squash easily or is packed in a plastic box; there is generally no opportunity on a day walk to cook food or boil water.

First aid kit Purchase a ready-made kit e.g. a St. John's kit, or take paracetamol or other pain relief, band-aids, whatever you use for blisters, and any personal medication; many people also take tweezers, gauze and elastic bandages, safety pins and scissors, snake-bite compression bandages, triangular bandages.

Map and compass Although you may not need a map and compass for some walks, such as short walks within the Canberra urban area, they are your best insurance in case you become separated from the walking group. The name of the relevant map (e.g. Corin Dam 1:25,000) is listed in the walk description in the CBC activity list.

Map container A plastic sleeve with waterproof seal usually around A4 size will keep your map dry in wet weather.

Global Positioning System device (GPS) Your leader will try to ensure there is one in the party; having your own GPS provides you with extra safety.

Personal locator beacon (PLB) Your leader will try to ensure there is one in the party; having your own PLB provides you with extra safety.

Mobile phone Where there is reception these are more versatile than a Personal Locator Beacon.

Matches These are an important survival aid if you are caught out overnight; carry them in a waterproof container.

Torch Your trip may return later than expected. Reverse the batteries when not in use, or choose a type of torch that cannot be accidentally switched on inside your pack.

Sunscreen Provides sun protection, also lip salve.

Insect repellent Useful in damp or coastal areas where leeches or ticks can be plentiful.

Pencil and paper for emergency notes.

Whistle If you are separated from the walking group, you can blow the whistle for longer than you can keep shouting.

Toilet paper in waterproof bag and plastic trowel.

What to wear on day walks

For cold or wet conditions, clothing can be either synthetic or machine-washable wool. The best warmth-for-weight combination is a number of layers (base, mid and outer) rather than a single heavy layer. For hot conditions, use synthetic blends such as polyester cotton, or cotton.

Underwear For colder conditions, add long sleeved and full-leg underwear.

Shirt Long-sleeved, long-tailed, loose fitting, with a collar for sun protection and to prevent your pack rubbing.

Shorts or light long pants for warm weather; your choice depends on your tolerance of scrub-scratched knees. Thicker long pants for cold weather. Long pants should be loose fitting (i.e. not jeans).

Overpants should be both wind and waterproof.

Warm top of synthetic material or machine-washable wool.

Waterproof jacket It should be longer than your shorts, openable completely at the front, and have a built in hood that is roomy enough to fit over a warm hat. Jackets made of Goretex, Hydronaut or similar waterproof but breathable material are recommended.

Shoes/boots Assess the terrain and weather before deciding whether to wear boots, sneakers/running shoes, or sandals. Boots are the most protective footwear against sharp rocks, sharp scrub, cold weather, damp vegetation and snake bite; you need to wear them in before your first day-long walk in them. Sneakers/walking shoes are lighter and generally provide more grip on smooth rock than boots, and if made of Goretex or similar material can give some protection in cold or damp weather. Sandals give little protection but provide the best grip on wet rock during a creek trip, and dry quickly. If you wear sandals, consider replacing the inner-sole with a tougher one.

Socks Wool/nylon blend are best overall, but synthetic socks are good for wet trips. Darned socks can cause blisters. Consider wearing two pairs, thin and thick, if you are wearing boots.

Hat with a wide 360 degree brim to protect against sun.

Swim wear

Handkerchief Tissues get wet and may litter the bush.

Balaclava Synthetic or silk.

Gaiters Nylon or canvas gaiters, ankle or knee length, keep prickles and snow out of socks and boots, protect against sharp scrub, and may absorb some venom if you are bitten by a snake.

Mittens and gloves. For cold or wet weather consider two layers e.g. gloves plus waterproof overmitts.

Spare shoes and clothes To leave in the car. Your driver will appreciate your wearing clean shoes and dry clothes when you get back in the car after a walk.

Fly veil. Consider for summer.

Additional gear to take on weekend and longer walks

Large pack Most people prefer packs with an internal or no frame. When buying, test by filling with 10 to 15 kg of gear.

Canyon bag Heavy duty plastic bag or commercial dry sack, for lining your pack to keep the contents dry in bad weather and river crossings. If you prefer garbage bin liners, which are cheaper, take more than one, because they are easily damaged.

Tent, tent pegs, tent poles. Some walkers prefer a tent fly in warm weather, and in forested areas use sticks rather than tent poles.

Groundsheet. Waterproof. Essential if you are using a fly rather than a tent.

Emergency bivvy bag. Sleeping bag sized plastic bag used in emergencies; not necessary if you are carrying a tent or fly.

Sleeping bag. Superdown filling and box walled construction give the best weight and volume efficiency. Good "fibre fill" bags are bulky but may be more suitable in wet conditions. A full length side zip allows you to spread the bag loosely over you on warmer nights. Most sleeping bags used for car-based camping are too cold, bulky and heavy for bushwalking.

Inner sheet Silk or acetate. Keeps your sleeping bag clean and provides extra warmth. **Sleeping mat.** Inflatable such as "Thermarests" or closed cell foam. Avoid air beds such as Lilos which have poorer insulation qualities.

Spare batteries or a second small torch.

Candle for both light and fire starting.

Repair kit needle, thread, safety pins, rubber bands, plastic bags.

Plastic tubing for sucking water from small pools, can also be used to start a campfire by blowing through it.

Watch, cash, camera, comb

Toothbrush and toothpaste. Consider carrying your tooth paste in a small screw-top container to avoid spillage.

Towel, small.

Soap but remember to use it well away from watercourses.

Stove and fuel for alpine trips and in wilderness areas.

Fire lighters solid fuel tablets (or use a candle).

Water container such as a winecask-style water carrier, for occasions when you camp at a distance from a water source.

Billy (pot) aluminium or titanium is lighter than tin. Pack it in a cloth or nylon bag.

Billy lifters aluminium device for lifting billy.

Pot mitt can serve as an alternative to billy lifters.

Frying pan - rarely carried because of their weight; an aluminium pie dish is a light weight alternative.

Plate aluminium, plastic or consider eating from your billy.

Mug preferably plastic, large = more tea!

Cutlery Knife, fork and/or spoon stainless steel or aluminium or tough plastic.

Can opener small, but better to avoid bringing cans, which you will have to carry out.

Cleaning gear A small section of a pot scourer or consider using river sand instead.

A tent, pack and sleeping bag will be the major items of expense, comfort and safety. You can hire these from the Club at nominal cost. You might like to consider hiring your gear initially, while you gain experience and gather advice.

Total weight

It is a common for inexperienced walkers to put too much weight into their packs. While it is important to be adequately equipped, an over-heavy pack can turn a stumble into a serious injury. A pack for a 2 day trip in cold weather should normally weigh in the 10 to 15 kg range, including the pack itself and daytime drinking water. Packs for warm weather trips should be lighter. To save weight on longer walks, consider dehydrated meals. Learn from others: 'What's your favourite weight-saving tip?' is a great conversation starter.

What not to bring

While the final decision is up to you, these items are rarely carried by experienced walkers on longer trips: pyjamas, a pillow, shampoo, cosmetics, clean changes of clothes apart from underwear and socks, spare shoes, heavy fry pans, drip coffee makers, hunting knives or anything larger than a Swiss army knife, liquids such as milk or beer.