

# Bushwalking with ABW Quick-Start Guide

Important information you should know before  
joining your first ABW pack-carrying walk





# Welcome to Adelaide Bushwalkers

If you're reasonably new to the idea of full pack-carrying hiking then this guide will give you some important information that will help make your walking experience with Adelaide Bushwalkers (ABW) both safe and enjoyable.

There's no doubt that hiking with ABW is a fabulous way to explore our natural environment with a group of friendly like-minded people. And although walking with a group is far safer than walking alone, there is still a certain amount of personal responsibility you must take before joining one of our walks.

This guide does NOT cover every aspect of bushwalking. Rather, it's goal is to simply provide some basic information to at least get you started before joining your first walk with the Club.

There is a lot more to learn in order to become a competent and skillful bushwalker, but the more walks you undertake with ABW, the more you will experience and learn. That being said, we expect all our members to be as self-sufficient as possible when on the trail.

Attending one of our New Member Training Weekend's is also an excellent way to get up to speed very quickly with some of the more important aspects of overnight full pack-carrying hiking.

In the end, if you have questions or are unsure of anything please get in touch with your walk leader. Alternatively, come along to the next ABW General Meeting, held on the first Wednesday every month from 7.30pm (except January). More details on the website.

# Backpacks

All hikers need a good quality properly fitted backpack with a hip-belt. It needs to be large enough to carry food and gear without discomfort.

Most bushwalkers on a 1 to 3 night trip will need a pack in the 50-75 litre range.

If you currently do not own a suitable pack, you can hire one from the Club. Alternatively, we recommend that you visit a specialist outdoor adventure store and be properly fitted out.

## Additional Resources

[How to Choose the Best Backpack](#)

[How to Adjust a Backpack](#)

[How to Adjust a Backpack for Hills](#)

[How to Lift a Heavy Backpack](#)



# Gear

The Club hires out a variety of gear allowing prospective and full members to try before buying their own. There is a wide range of backpacks, tents and sleeping bags available which will help you to decide which equipment best suits you.

Ideally, your total pack weight for a 1-3 night trip should be in the 14-16 Kg range (not including water). However, it's likely your pack will weigh more than this simply because you may not yet have invested in enough light-weight gear. In this case, at least aim to keep the total weight under 20 Kg. Of course, your physical build, health and fitness must always be considered.

Generally, males should not carry more than one-third and females not more than one-quarter of their body weight.

And always remember *if you pack it... you gotta carry it!* It takes a certain amount of discipline to pack lightly. So always rethink if that little extra something is really necessary.

## Additional Resources

[Suggested Gear List](#)

[Packing Guide \(with video\)](#)



# Clothing

Your clothing is important since it is your first line of protection from the cold, the wind, the rain, the sun, insects, snakes and the scrub. Garments purchased from a specialist outdoor gear supplier will provide better comfort and protection in the bush than cheap cotton T-shirts and nylon raincoats.

In general, cotton is unsuitable for bushwalking as it is cold and clingy when wet and slow to dry. Fabrics made from wool or some synthetics are preferred.

Wear a pair of thick woollen socks to reduce the possibility of blisters forming. Cotton socks are best avoided.

Gaiters protect your lower legs from cuts and scratches, irritating stones or grass seeds working their way into your socks, and mud getting into your boots. They also offer additional protection against snakes.

Always carry a quality water and windproof jacket that has been manufactured for bushwalking. A nylon spray jacket is insufficient protection in heavy rain and does not breathe. Waterproof over-pants may be useful if heavy or prolonged rain is expected. NEVER wear jeans, which become cold and do not dry easily.

In cold conditions, carry a beanie, gloves, down jacket or polar fleece, and possibly some thermal underwear for nighttime.

In sunny conditions wear a sun hat and a light-weight long-sleeved shirt or hiking top to protect against sunburn. Also wear sunglasses and sunscreen.

## Additional Resources

[Clothes for Hiking \(with video\)](#)



# Footwear

There are a variety of viewpoints when it comes to selecting the most appropriate footwear for bushwalking. At a minimum it should be closed-toe and provide good foot protection.

Sports shoes and trail runners are light, comfortable and provide reasonable grip. Their main drawbacks are that they are not waterproof and do not provide any ankle support. These may not be the best option when hiking in rugged areas such as the Flinders Ranges.

Hiking shoes are often waterproof making them good in muddy conditions and are also relatively light. Some varieties also provide reasonable ankle support.

Hiking boots are both the sturdiest and the heaviest types of footwear available. With these you will have the maximum ankle protection. However, it will take time to wear them in and so you can expect to get a few blisters until you do.

## Additional Resources

[Hiking Footwear Overview](#)

[How to Choose the Best Hiking Shoes](#)



# Food

Since food is your main energy source, it is important to eat often and wisely when bushwalking, particularly on extended or physically demanding trips.

A day spent bushwalking generally expends more energy than a typical one at home. So don't skip breakfast, eat a little more than usual, and have frequent snacks of high energy food (e.g. dried fruit, nuts and chocolate).

On overnight walks, have a generous serving of carbohydrates such as rice, couscous or pasta for the evening meal. Hot soup replaces lost salts and is an excellent starter to warm the tired body and boost energy. You can also purchase various dehydrated meals (simply add water) from camping suppliers and outdoor adventure shops.

As a general guide, most walkers need between 700-1000 grams of food per day. This is the total weight of three meals and all snacks.

## Additional Resources

[Food Ideas for Multi-Day Walks](#)

[Easy Hiking Food for Overnight Trips](#)

[Backpacking Stoves: How to Choose](#)



# Water

Please refer to the information provided by the walk leader with regards to the availability of water during your hike. Sometimes the Club will walk in areas where there is no safe drinking water available. If this is the case, you will need to carry an amount of water to last you the entire trip or part there-of. If unsure, please contact the walk leader beforehand.

As a general guide, the daily water requirement of the average active person is approximately 2-3 litres in cool/mild weather, rising to 4 litres (or more) in warmer weather. We recommend you carry at least a day's worth of water with you unless advised otherwise.

The most durable water containers are made from aluminium or heavy duty BPA-free plastic (e.g. Nalgene). Light plastic bottles may burst when subject to rough use. Flexible bladders with a drinking tube (often marketed as hydration systems), that enable water to be consumed as you walk, are also very popular.

If water will be available during your walk, it may need to be purified before drinking. There are various methods of purifying water while on a bushwalk (e.g. using Micropur Forte tablets). Please speak with your walk leader for further advice.

## Additional Resources

[How to Treat Drinking Water](#)



# First-Aid

A basic first-aid kit is an essential item when hiking. While you don't need to go overboard, you certainly need to be prepared to manage the most common scenarios and carry certain other items (like a snake bite bandage) that may be critical in an emergency.

In general, avoid purchasing ready-made first-aid kits. It is far better to put your own kit together using the below list as a guide. Minimize bulk and weight by carrying appropriately sized quantities and carry everything either in a waterproof container or dry bag.

## Suggested Items

- Setopress compression (snake bite) bandage (purchase from ABW)
- Blister plasters (e.g. Compeed)
- Band-aid plasters
- Wound dressings
- Rigid strapping tape 25mm (e.g. Leukoplast or Elastoplast)
- Paper tape (e.g. Micropore) or fabric tape (e.g. Hypafix)
- Antiseptic (e.g. Betadine swabs or a small bottle)
- Crepe bandage 50mm
- Wound closure strips (e.g. Steri-Strips)
- Sterile saline (plastic ampoule or sachet)
- Disposable gloves 1 pair
- Pain relief tablets (paracetamol and/or ibuprofen)
- Antihistamine tablets
- Bite & sting gel (e.g. Stingose)
- Oral rehydration powder/tablets (e.g. Hydralyte)
- Any medications you regularly take

Other items such as insect-repellent, sunscreen, thermal space blanket etc. may also be required depending on trip type, location and season.

# And Finally...

- Always check the latest forecasts in the walk area before you leave home so you're well prepared. The best websites to use are linked to below.  
[Bureau of Meteorology - MetEye](#) (Simply enter your walk location in the top search bar)  
[Willy Weather](#)
- All walkers MUST carry a completed [In Case of Emergency \(ICE\) Form](#) in the top pocket of their backpack at all times.
- You should carry a whistle you can blow to attract attention in case of emergency. Purchase from outdoor adventure suppliers.
- If you have joined up for an ABW walk but need to cancel, please remove your name from the walk list on the website as soon as possible. If you need to cancel within 72 hours of the walk you will also need to either phone or email the walk leader directly to let them know as a courtesy.
- If you're not sure you can walk 15 Km with a full pack, then please don't make your first walk with the Club one that requires you to do just that. Read the walk description carefully; take note of the trip's grading and choose appropriately.
- And of course, don't forget to have fun!







# Adelaide Bushwalkers

*“Takes you places”*

[adelaidebushwalkers.org](http://adelaidebushwalkers.org)