

Health, Hygiene & Safety

- **Leave No Trace camping principles must be adhered to by all.**
- **Leave nothing but footprints!**

These notes will help to make your Pedal Aussie experience safer and more enjoyable.

- All cyclists should read the information about staying safe on the road and in parks.
- Cycling in summer
- It is strongly recommended that you do not carry out any extended cycle tours between December and the start of March without supervision of others.
- Please plan to cycle tours outside of these months and avoid putting your life at risk and the lives of those that may need to rescue you.
- Use of tents and hammocks , free camping and tent and hammock sites.
- Hammocks are warm, or cool and keep the bugs out depending on the set up.
- Tents are warm, keep the bugs out and great to have when the shelter is full.
- There is no booking system for the shelters and it is recommended that tents be carried, as space in a shelter cannot be guaranteed. All cyclists who intend to stay overnight in a shelter on the Road should carry a tent, in case the shelter is full on arrival or you wish to be warmer at night, be away from snorers and protected from mosquitos and other bugs.
- Groups of more than eight people are not permitted to occupy a shelter until after 6pm.
- Tents must be pitched in the sites provided at the campsites, as able.
- Hammocks must be hung without overhanging branches, especially in storms and on the sites provided at the campsites, as able.

Waste

- Not all free campsite has a pit toilet. Toilet facilities at the campsites are to be used when available. Where no toilet facility is available, waste and toilet paper must be buried 15cm deep and must be at least 100 metres from any body of water.
- Minimum impact bush walking and cycling.
- No food, or sanitary items are to be put in the toilet, buried or left at the campsite, on the Track or in the bush. This includes organic items such as apple cores and fruit peel.

Campfires, Bushfires and Prescribed burns

- A small fire is more than enough.
- Campfires are a tradition in Australian bush cycling. However, the environment is becoming less and less tolerant of campfires. Many campsites have been stripped bare of firewood due to the continual use of fires. Fires, if lit at all, should be kept to a minimal size.
- Campfires may be lit only at approved campsites.
- No fireplaces at campsites, fuel stoves only must be used.
- See also: fires at campsites and bushfire information and bushfire safety produced by the Appropriate Parks and Wildlife Service.
- All cyclists must take care with fire. No one is permitted to light a fire on days of very-high or extreme fire danger. Under these circumstances, operate a fuel stove only at the campsite. Under no circumstances should a fuel stove be used in or near a tent. All fires must be totally extinguished before you leave a campsite.

Water

- Water should be treated with respect.
- Water tanks at campsites are not filled other than by rainfall and the water must last through long dry spells.
- Untreated water may contain micro-organisms and particles, which can cause diseases such as gastro enteritis.
- Drink only treated water - this includes treating water taken from the campsite water tanks.
- Do not assume that creeks or watercourses indicated on the maps have water in them.

Detergents

- Everyday soaps and detergents should not be used in the Australian bush. They are harmful to its biodiversity.
- Biodegradable toothpaste should be considered.
- Sanitizing gels that require no water and leave no waste is a must.
- Biodegradable toothpaste and Sanitizing gels can be purchased at most supermarkets; outdoor equipment stores and pharmacies.
- Cyclists should not bring everyday soaps, detergents, or shampoo to use in the bush.

Pests and risks to health

- March flies can be a problem in the drier, warmer months. They will give a painful bite and are particularly attracted to the colour blue. At dawn and dusk, mosquitoes and midges are most active.
- Ross River virus is a debilitating illness which can be transmitted by mosquito bites. It is most prevalent in the warmer, summer months anywhere where mosquitoes are likely to be found, such as near water courses and any swampy areas. It is most important to protect the skin at these times by using insect repellent and covering up.
- Cyclists often carry a mosquito net to set up inside campsite shelters to if not using a tent protect against mosquitoes. Please however ensure that your net does not impact upon other cyclists using the shelter. It is always better to carry and use a tent or hammock with a net.

Venomous snakes

- Can also be encountered almost anywhere along the road, particularly in spring.
- Always keep in mind always that snakes are more afraid of you than you are of them. Normally they will sense the thumping of your footfalls and make a hasty retreat well before you can see them.
- An exception to this can be on unseasonably warm days in late winter and spring when any snakes, which curl up for a long sleep during cold weather, will be sluggish if they are around.
- They are more likely to feel threatened and, if encountered, the cycle tourer should steer well clear of them.
- Most bites occur on the ankle or lower leg, so wearing gaiters, thick socks and sturdy boots will help prevent snake bites.
- In the event of a snakebite see first aid tips below.

Kangaroo and pepper ticks

- Can easily find their way from bushes onto your body when you brush past them.
- They are particularly common from October to early autumn.
- Carefully check your body regularly, especially creases, as they can go undetected for some time and can cause irritation in some people.

- If they have buried their heads into your skin, the best remedy to remove them is to use fine pointed tweezers to carefully remove the tick, ensuring the head is not left beneath the skin. *Tea tree oil will greatly help reduce itching.*

Sandflies

- Can be a problem for people who are sensitive to their bite and can occur anywhere.
- They are very small, grey flies.
- Their bite is not immediately detected but within a few hours or a day of being bitten small, red, very itchy marks may develop on the skin at the bite sites.
- It is not uncommon for sensitive people to have dozens of bites that can be very itchy and take up to a week to settle down.
- Insect repellent, covering up and avoiding sitting on the ground in the bush appear to help. *Tea tree oil will greatly help reduce itching.*

Wildlife

- Do not under any circumstances feed the wildlife.
- Dingo, wild pigs and wild dogs inhabit the road verges, but are rarely seen. You are advised to not approach them.
- Feral foxes and cats may also be seen but pose no threat to humans.

Bees

- Bees are often attracted to the campsite rainwater tank and tap, especially in the drier months. Bees are also prevalent in the spring with the onset of the wildflower season.
- If you are allergic to bee stings, then ensure you carry the appropriate medication.

First aid

- Knowing even basic first aid comes in handy.
- The following information should only be used as a guideline and should not replace your first aid training!
- There are many courses available to the public, but we suggest that a wilderness first aid course is more appropriate.
- You should also carry an appropriate first aid kit.

Avoiding snake bite

- Do not approach a snake: it doesn't know what your intention is, and that you are just observing or trying to help.
- You can make a snake very scared by pointing and waving your arms in the air above the snake, so instead, keep your movements calm and slow. Also, don't raise your feet up in front of the snake - that will provoke a strike.
- Wear closed-in footwear at all times when bush cycling and preferably wear long trousers.
- Use a dead stick or trekking pole to probe long grass as you cycle tours through, as this will encourage the snake to move out of your path.
- Do not cast a shadow onto a snake as that will make it nervous.
- Most bites occur on the ankle or lower leg, so wearing gaiters will help prevent snake bites. Wear ankle to knee gaiters. There are 30 species of snakes in Australia that are considered to have life-threatening venom.
- These belong to one group of snakes known as elapids, meaning they have fixed front fangs.
- The average length would be 4-6mm on a metre long snake and up to 12mm on a very large snake.
- These relatively small fangs means that by wearing gaiters you can greatly decrease the chance of a snake successfully piercing you skin.

- Gaiters will help prevent a bite but can never offer 100% protection against snake bites.

Snake bite treatment

- Always keep your snake bite kit handy in your pack. Three bandage rolls are recommended.
- Keep the patient calm and completely at rest.
- Call 000 if you have a phone signal. Use the Emergency + App to determine your GPS location. Always have help come to the patient. Do not try to walk the patient to help.
- Immediately apply pressure directly on to the bite. You must remove all clothing and/or footwear. If you cannot get down to skin level, applying pressure may not be as effective as it should be. Get a visual on the bite.
- If the victim is bitten on a limb, apply a firm compression bandage from just below the knee or elbow with the first bandage and down to the toes or fingers (but without covering them). Use the second bandage if needed to complete this.
- With the second bandage (or the third bandage if the second has already been used), start at the same point as the first bandage and work your way up to the groin or armpit.
- The bandage should be firm but not tight - blood supply should not be cut off. Check circulation by squeezing the toes or fingers. They should return to normal skin colour within three to four seconds after squeezing showing that the blood supply has not been cut off. If blood supply has been cut off, then you need to remove the bandages and start again.
- Mark the site of the bite on the bandage by a circle and also write the time of the bite on the bandage.
- The limb should be immobilised with a splint or sling so they cannot move it. Even something simple as tying the ankles together will stop any attempt to cycle tours.
- Once applied, the bandage should remain in place until medical care arrives (try to bring transport as near as possible to the patient). Never remove the bandage. Trained medical personnel will do this.
- Do not wash the venom off the skin, as this will assist in the identification of the snake.
- Do not attempt to catch the snake. You will probably be bitten as well.
- Do not elevate the affected limb.
- Do not apply a tourniquet.
- Always assume that a bite contains venom. While it is true that snakes preserve their venom to kill prey (rather than use it in defence), it is near impossible when out on the road or roadside to determine if the bite contains venom or is a dry bite.

Bee stings

- The barb from a sting should be removed if it remains in the flesh.
- Remove the barb by brushing or scraping sideways; never pull the sting out as it will inject more venom.
- Raise the affected part and apply a cool compress or chemical ice to reduce swelling.
- Anyone who has an allergic reaction should also be treated as for a snake bite.

Heat exhaustion and dehydration

- Exposure to hot and humid weather may lead to these conditions as a result of normal body cooling processes becoming inefficient. The person may feel hot, faint, giddy, thirsty, complain of nausea, cramps, headache, and will appear clammy with excessive sweating, rapid breathing and have a rapid pulse rate.
- Assist the person to rest in shade.
- Sponge exposed skin with cool water.
- Ensure the person drinks plenty of cool water preferably mixed with electrolytes.

Sprains and strains

- Sprains occur when a ligament around a joint is over-stretched or torn, or when a muscle or tendon is over-stretched or torn. Similar aid is required in both cases.
- Assist the person to be comfortable.
- Raise the injured part to reduce swelling.
- Support the injury with a firm bandage and apply a cool compress over the bandage for 10 minutes.
- Rest the injury for up to 48 hours.

Ticks

- Current best practice is to remove the tick using an ether to freeze it. It will then fall out. Match head hot works.
- Alternatively (or if it doesn't fall out after freezing) grip the tick with special tick tweezers and gently twist it out, but it is imperative that the tweezers are applied as close to the skin as possible before closing them.
- Do not use household tweezers.
- Avoid squeezing the body of the tick as it may squeeze its saliva into the wound – a common problem with using household tweezers.
- Check the rest of the body, including hair, skin creases & ears.
- Other removal options include using a mixture of tea-tree and eucalyptus oils to kill it before removal.

Bleeding and wounds

- If too much blood is being lost from a wound or injury, stop the flow of blood by pressing firmly on the wound with a bulky sterile dressing.
- Keep firm pressure on the wound for 10 min with the person resting. If the wound is on a limb, elevate the limb.
- Comfort and reassurance will slow heartbeat and reduce further loss of blood.
- Minor wounds should be cleaned and dressed.

Please note that this information is only a guide to assist in emergencies on the Tour - adequate preparation is also essential when planning a Pedal Aussie cycle tours.

Be first aid trained!

Reference: <https://www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/trip-planner/health-hygiene-safety/>