



Photo: Travis Holmes

# Green Guide to Freshwater Paddling

**LEAVE NO TRACE**

[www.lnt.org.au](http://www.lnt.org.au)

**Best-practice environmental management for raft, canoe & kayak touring**

\*This guide promotes the seven principles of **LEAVE NO TRACE** ethics for minimal impact travel for Freshwater Paddling.

\* This guide is intended to help recreational paddlers, commercial white-water paddlers, tour operators and their clients improve their environmental management and reduce their environmental impact on our rivers, riverbanks and lakes.

## **\*\*IMPORTANCE**

*Minimal Impact techniques are not only important to environmental protection and future of the wilderness but also to the satisfaction and positive experience of the outdoor enthusiast.*

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## Plan Ahead & Prepare

### Repackage Food

- Plan your meals carefully to reduce waste and leftovers. Repackage food into reusable containers or plastic bags to reduce the amount of potential rubbish or litter you bring to the river.
- Water proof well to keep food attractive and edible.

### Carry Water

- Water is an extremely precious resource. Practice water conservation and carry extra drinking water.
- Carry water a purification system or tablets.

### Equipment

- Taking proper and adequate equipment can help you *Leave No Trace*. Plan on using a camp stove to cook your meals. Bring all the necessary equipment for washing dishes, straining dishwater and carrying out rubbish and human waste. Also take all necessary safety equipment to deal with cold wet days or paddling mishaps.

### Knowledge of the Area

- Be familiar with the weather and water conditions (level, temperature, speed) and what fluctuations you might expect.
- Be careful of flash flooding. Know your corridor safety exits.
- A river map is extremely helpful in determining where to camp. Don't overshoot your planned site.
- Take time to scout rapids. Wrapped rafts or pinned kayaks and other lost gear certainly add to river rubbish.

### Know the regulations

- Check with Land managers for information and special considerations of the river you are visiting.
- Obtain permits or permission if required.

### Qualified Guides.

- Check that your guides have adequate skills in first aid, and safety, health and hygiene, and dealing with clients as well as technical paddling skills.
- Guides also need a basic field knowledge of ecology in order to explain how “minimal impact” practices work.

## Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

### Boating

- Take care to avoid trampling shorelines while exiting and entering the river.
- Choose durable surfaces like rock, gravel or sand to load and unload your boat.

### Walking

- **Stay on the track.** Try to walk only where obvious tracks do exist and single file as much as possible to avoid widening the track.
- **In unspoilt areas,** take care not to create a new track. Spread out and walk carefully to avoid trampling.
- **Plant Species.** Find out about local vegetation to learn about those that are fragile and those that are resilient.
- **Unloading Gear.** Try to unload your gear and take breaks on large flat rocks or other durable ground to avoid damaging vegetation.
- **Avoid revegetation areas.**

### Camping.

- If there is an established campsite, use it. Take care not to create new ones.
- Other wise camp on rock, sands, or gravel where impact is smallest. When these can't be found, then on areas with durable grasses or weeds.
- Avoid digging, landscaping and trenching around tents.
- When leaving a campsite, “naturalise it”. Fluff up flattened grasses, brush away boot prints and replace any rocks that have been kicked or moved.

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## Dispose of Waste Properly

### Rubbish

- Minimise the amount of rubbish by planning ahead to reduce excess packaging.
- Pack out all rubbish including organic kitchen waste in a durable container.
- Do not burn rubbish.
- Take care to tie down loose gear on top of your boat to avoid loss and therefore, pollution of the water body.

### Washing

- Pans, cutlery and crockery should never be washed directly in water bodies.
- Wash 100 m from the edge of rivers and lakes.
- Pour used wash water through a fine mesh strainer to remove small food scraps to be carried out. Then scatter grey water on bushes, leaf litter or grassy areas, or into a small pit well away from water bodies.
- Use biodegradable detergent or preferably, no detergent at all. Instead, try using really hot water alone.
- Never use shampoo or soap in a river or lake. Try going without detergent for bathing.
- If bathing is necessary, use buckets or bush showers at least 100m away from the water body.
- Hand washing for hygiene after toileting should also be done with biodegradable detergent at least 100 m away from water bodies. Hand sanitisers also work really well for this.

### Toileting.

- Use toilets and other developed sites for human waste disposal where they're available.

- In most situations, best practice requires portable toilets with all waste carried out to a sewage system for incineration.
- Plastic bag lined ammo boxes or rocket boxes are still widely used, while stainless steel units are available commercially and are used by many larger operators.
- Most National Parks recommend the method of burial disposal in low use areas. In this case individuals should bring a trowel to dig a cat hole 10-15 cm deep and greater than 100 m from water each time and well away from climbing routes.
- If toilet paper use is necessary, use it sparingly and bury it deeply or preferably, carry it out.
- Natural toilet paper like smooth stones, grass, sticks or bits of bark can make it possible to avoid man-made toilet paper all together. Make sure plant material is dead and of non-irritating variety. These can be buried in the cat-hole as well.
- Urinate on bare ground away from vegetation, campsites and tracks.

## Leave What You Find

### Respecting Culture.

- Avoid coming close to Indigenous sites out of respect for the culture and to ensure their longevity.
- Ask for permission.
- Land managers can sometimes advise you on these locations.

### Preserve Nature.

- When we leave shells, feathers, flowers, fossils, artefacts and other objects of interest as we find them, we pass the gift of discovery on to those that follow.
- Educate by discovering the ecological niche role that these objects play.
- Avoid areas where rare and vulnerable plants or animals are found. Land managers can advise you of these locations.
- Retain the special qualities of every natural heritage area for the long term.

### **Preserve the Past.**

- It is illegal to excavate, disturb or remove archaeological, historical and cultural artefacts from any public or wilderness lands.

### **Introduced Species.**

- Avoid Spreading Non-native plant and animal species that are generally impossible to eradicate once they are introduced.
- Avoid spreading diseases like *Giardia* or *Cryptosporidium* by properly disposing of human waste at least 100m from water.
- Do not transport flowers, weeds or aquatic plants into or out of natural areas.
- Empty and clean out your packs, tents, pegs boots, boats, fishing equipment, vehicles and other gear after every trip. Water, mud and soil may contain harmful spores like *Phytophthora Cinnamoni* (dieback fungus) or tiny plants and animals, which can invade other environments.
- Use wash stations where provided.
- Help landowners and managers initiate control efforts by alerting them to infested areas.
- If a trip crosses areas known to contain pathogens, visit the un-infected area first.

## **Minimise the Impact of Fires**

### **Impacts of Campfires**

- Building campfires in many cases has compromised the natural appearance of the wilderness and the demand for firewood.
- Fire rings overflowing with ashes, half-burnt logs, food and trash are unsightly.
- Campfires can and do ignite bushfires.

### **Local Regulations.**

- Check with local landowners and managers as to whether fire building is permitted and in which season.

### **Cooking.**

- Carry a light stove and enough fuel for cooking.
- Use a candle with drip catcher for light.



## Heat.

- Carry enough warm clothing so that fires for warmth are unnecessary.

## Minimal Impact Fires

- If this is permitted and it is important to you, then build a minimal impact fire.
- Judge the wind, weather, location and wood availability.
- Choose small dead pieces of wood that are found on the ground. Do not break off branches from trees or bushes.
- Use pre-existing established fire rings. Dismantle and naturalise any extra fire rings.
- Where there are no fire rings build a mound fire. Lay down a large ground cloth or fire pan and collect sand, gravel or soil with a low organic content with a stuff sack and a trowel. Construct a pedestal approx. 25 cm thick by 75 cm in diameter on the ground cloth or fire pan.
- Burn all wood to ash and distinguish completely with water.
- Scatter cold ash widely and disperse the soil.
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## Respect Wildlife

### Sensitivity.

- Understand through education the role each species plays in each environment in order to realise the importance of its position within an ecosystem.
- Realise the impact we as visitors have when we visit their habitats.
- Avoid nesting sites of raptors during spring and summer. Watch the birds as they circle to identify crags to avoid.
- Observe animals from a distance so that they may go about their regular activities such as feeding, hunting or mating. Touching nests or young animals may cause their parents to abandon them.
- Never feed wild animals so that they do not develop a dependence or familiarity with humans and remain as wild as possible.
- Store food and rubbish securely and keep a clean camp.

## **Pets**

- Wildlife and pets do not mix. Keep pets at home. **All National Parks restrict pets** so check for regulations first.
- Report any injured animals to the local land managers. Do not attempt to handle the animal.

## **Be Considerate of Your Hosts and Other Visitors**

### **Respect your Hosts.**

- Learn about the cultural history of the land. Recognise, acknowledge and respect local knowledge.
- Seek permission and/or a permit.

### **Outdoor Etiquette.**

- We share the wilderness with other outdoor enthusiasts. Respect others' wilderness experience by examining our own behaviours to minimise any negative impacts.
- Be efficient. Try to avoid clogging up boat ramps and other entrance/exit areas.

### **Cooperative Spirit.**

- Often we rely on others when mishaps occur. Our experiences often depend upon our treatment of others and their attitudes toward us.

### **Keep a Low Profile.**

- Have rest breaks in discreet places to minimise impact on other groups. If possible camp out of sight and sound of other visitors. Try not to wear bright coloured cloths or use bright coloured tents that can cause disturbance to animals as well as other recreational users.

### **Let Nature's Sound Prevail.**

- Keep noise to a reasonable level. Listen to nature.
- Keep voices low in canyon corridors to avoid sound carrying. Talk quietly especially when in large groups
- Avoid the use of bright lights, radios, electronic games, mobile phones and other intrusive urban devices.