

Minimal Impact Guidelines

School Excursions



Natural environments provide an excellent way for students to learn about themselves, the world they live in, and how humans and nature interact with each other. To help protect these natural areas it is important to make sure our activities have minimal impact on the environment.

The larger size of many school groups can have a significant impact on the environment. These guidelines are designed to allow schools access to the amazing diversity of Victoria's natural areas while minimising the impacts to the environment and other park users.

Planning

Finding the right location

School groups can choose from a diverse range of outdoor experiences in Victoria. Information about the facilities and the types of experiences available in each park can be found on the Parks Victoria Website.

Contact the land owner or manager

Land managers know the site best. They can provide advice on the most suitable place for your school visit that takes into consideration:

- Group size
- Type of activity or experience sought
- Sites to avoid – the includes location of fragile or highly sensitive areas or locations at particular times such as habitat used for bird breeding
- Location of cultural or heritage sites

Schools must contact the local park office prior to arriving for both day and overnight visits to a national park. This is for both safety and protection of natural values of the park and is a requirement of the [Department of Education's Safety Guidelines for Education Outdoors](#).

To find local contact details of Parks Victoria offices call 13 1963.

Preparation checklist

- Familiarise yourself with any specific regulations for the area you will visit
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards and emergencies
- Avoid times of peak use if possible
- Avoid activities with large groups – large groups have a greater impact and affects the natural experience for both the groups and other park users
- Ensure all students and staff are aware of the minimal impact guidelines
- Outline equipment that students will need such as plastic bags for carrying out waste
- Ensure students pack to minimise rubbish

More information

Visit www.parks.vic.gov.au or call 13 1963.

On Arrival

Students should be briefed on ways they can minimise their impact. By contacting the park office beforehand, you may be able to arrange for a park ranger to deliver minimal impact and safety messages as well as tell your students about the great natural features of the park.

During your visit, remember to reinforce good practices throughout your visit by providing positive feedback to students. Positive phrasing makes messages more effective. For example, "Leave things where they are" instead of "don't take."

Tread Lightly

Tracks are carefully designed to allow people to visit natural environments while minimising the impact on the environment. Staying on track minimises erosion, limits spreading of diseases and weeds, and helps you from getting lost.

All native plants, animals, geological features, historical and cultural remains are protected by law in national parks. Ensure that they remain undisturbed.

Waste management

Human wastes can contaminate waterways and cause disease. Make use of toilet facilities where they exist, even if you don't really need to go.

In areas without toilets:

- Take a hand trowel
- Choose a spot at least 100m away from campsites and watercourses
- Use a different area each time. This spread the impact over a wider area
- Dig a hole 15cm deep. Bury all faecal waste and paper, mixing it with soil to help decomposition and to discourage animals
- Carry out all personal items like sanitary pads and tampons

Camping

Parks Victoria manages a range of campsites which provide a diverse range of experiences for school groups. These range from large campgrounds with toilet and shower facilities suitable for larger groups through to remote locations which may only be suitable for groups up to six people.

Each campground has a cap on the number of people who can camp there. These limits vary for each site so you will need to discuss this with the local park office. The limits are set to ensure the natural values of the campground are maintained and to minimise impacts on the environment and other campers.

Planning

Planning is the most important step in minimising your group's impact on the environment. Local park rangers have the best information and advice about selecting the right campground to suit your needs.

- Call Parks Victoria on 13 1963 to discuss which parks provide suitable camping experiences for your group.
- Discuss issues such as maximum group size allowed for the campground and if bookings are required, access to toilets and other information specific to the chosen site.
- Take only what is essential
- Leave radios and other loud devices at home
- Ensure you have sufficient containers to carry out all of your group's rubbish

Setting up camp

It is important that your camp site is well set up for a comfortable stay.

- Camp in designated spaces only. If there are no more spaces left then the campground is full
- Keep your group together. This ensures that there is enough space for others to also use the campground
- Place tents on sandy or hard surfaces rather than boggy or vegetated areas
- Digging trenches around tents is unnecessary – erect tents on a well-drained site
- Keep noise levels down at night. Noise can scare away native animals and disturb other campers
- Ensure you follow the minimal impact guidelines for rubbish, waste and fires

Food and wastes

Native animals have adapted over time to the food found in nature. Human food can make animals sick. Feeding can also make animals reliant on humans for food, which may lead to aggressive behaviour.

- Keep your food and wastes in a secure container. Plastic bags are not secure – animals can easily rip these open
- Be careful with food in tents. Wombats can eat through tent walls and some possums can open zips.

Washing

Detergents, toothpaste and all types of soap harm fish and wildlife.

- Don't wash in streams and lakes - Wash at least 50m away
- Scatter the washwater so that it filters through the soil
- Use gritty sand and a scourer instead of soap to clean dishes
- Don't throw food scraps into streams or lakes

