



While most campers, hikers and all-around explorers will have heard of the Leave No Trace Principles – how many could you name off the top of your head?

You could probably remember a few, but if your memory is just a tad rusty, then let's revisit the 7 Leave No Trace Principles.

The 7 Leave No Trace Principles

1. Plan ahead and prepare

The first one seems like a no-brainer, but next time you decide to go on a spontaneous weekend away, take a few extra steps to ensure that you've done some planning. Do some research on the place that you're going to visit, in case there are special rules or requirements that you need to follow. Always take everything you could need in an emergency which includes: a PLB, a lightweight emergency shelter, a first aid kit, emergency blanket, and an extra day's worth of food.

This way you won't have to resort to improvising, or making decisions that might impact badly on the local environment – such as building a makeshift shelter or lighting a campfire in a restricted area.



Sand is considered a suitable surface to pitch your tent on. Photo: Black Wolf

2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces

Travelling and camping on durable surfaces is an important one. If you're camping in an area that has designated campsites or platforms then make sure that you use those. When hiking or exploring, always walk along the designated tracks to keep activity to one area.

According to Leave No Trace Australia, soft plants, muddy sites, and fragile soil layers are non-durable surfaces and should be avoided. While rock outcrops, sand, gravel, dry grasses, snow, and tent platforms are considered durable to travel and camp across.



*Only use biodegradable soap and strain and scatter dishwater when you're done with it.
Photo: Sea to Summit*

3. Dispose of waste properly

Everything you bring with you must be taken out. Don't burn or bury rubbish as this will still attract animals and put them at risk. Not to mention the fumes a fire will make, and the risk of bushfires it creates. Take all your rubbish and waste out with you in plastic or leak-proof trash bags. Alternatively, use a spare wheel bin bag which will keep native wildlife out of your rubbish and the stink out of your car.

Ensure that you dispose of human waste properly. If you're using a portable camp toilet, only get rid of waste at a designated waste dump point.

Otherwise, pack a trowel with you for bathroom visits. To safely go to the toilet in the bush, dig a hole away from water sources, campsites and trails, that is roughly 20cm deep, and then cover and disguise it properly. You shouldn't bury toilet paper, so take it with you in a



Ziploc bag until you can dispose of it safely.

Hot water works really well for washing dishes, but if you absolutely have to use detergent or soap, only use the biodegradable kind. After you've finished washing your dishes, strain the water to catch food scraps and then scatter it at least 50 metres from water sources.

If you see rubbish when you're out and about - be a good citizen and take it with you. It's not nice to clean up after others, but it's better than leaving it for an animal to find!



Pack it in, pack it out - simple! Photo: Sea to Summit.

4. Leave what you find

When you're out exploring, or hiking a trail there are so many incredible things to discover along the way. While it can be tempting to pick up a perfectly shaped pebble, a feather from a rare bird, or a wildflower in bloom - if you remove it from its environment, then it robs the next person of the experience of discovering it.

If you're going to be travelling across an area where you know there is a site of cultural or spiritual significance, you can still take it all in without touching or interfering with it in any way.

Another aspect of leaving what you find is ensuring that you clean your boots and tyres thoroughly so that you don't introduce anything new into a fragile environment.



There are so many incredible things to discover, just make sure you leave them be. Photo: Eve Woods.

5. Minimise campfire impacts

Campfires are a huge part of camping. They add warmth, atmosphere, and allow you to cook delicious meals. But, they pose a risk for the habitats of local wildlife, they char and damage the landscape, and of course, they can be a huge risk for bushfires.

While a camping stove and lantern don't necessarily provide the atmosphere of a campfire - they'll help you leave as little impact as possible.

Only light a fire in a permitted area, and if you do so - use an established fire ring or pit. That way you're keeping the damage to the areas that are set up for that purpose.

When it comes to fuel for your fire, use eco-friendly timber options such as compacted wood briquettes - to prevent depleting and destroying native habitat. For more on campfire etiquette, head here.



Keep the impact from your campfire to a minimum. Photo: Darche

6. Respect wildlife

If you happen to spot native animals out in the wild - it can be quite a special thing to observe them. But keep a respectful distance so you don't disturb their natural behaviour, or scare them out of their habitat.

It's essential that you keep your food secure, and that you don't intentionally feed local



animals. It can be damaging to the health and behaviour of native species if they forage for, and eat human food.

This comes back to another principle of making sure that you leave everything as you find it. This includes taking all rubbish and food with you to limit the risk to animals and to prevent an unsightly mess.

If you want to observe animals, then bring a pair of binoculars so you can still watch from a distance without disturbing their normal way of life.



While it is exciting to spot an animal in the wild, keep a respectful distance. Photo: Coleman

7. Be considerate of your hosts and other visitors

While we all want to feel a sense of freedom and escape when we head outdoors, don't forget that you'll always be sharing your space with other people and animals on your travels. With this in mind, here are some things to think about to ensure you're being considerate.

If you bring your pets along, make sure they don't disturb others and that they're on their best behaviour. This means keeping them away from local wildlife and preventing them from foraging and digging.

Consider how having bright lights on at night may affect other people's experience. Not to mention how it disturbs the nocturnal animals in the area.

Generators can make a lot of noise, so try not to run them at night or in the early hours of the morning. Same goes for loud music - this will keep others from sleeping or enjoying their night.

So there you have it, the 7 Leave No Trace Principles

We all want to continue camping, hiking and exploring what this great country has to offer for many years to come. A little more mindfulness means that we can keep nature in as pristine condition as possible. Happy adventuring everyone!

What else do you do to ensure that you're minimising your impact on your outdoor adventures? Let us know in the comments.