



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? Granted, probably a few - but if your memory is a tad rusty, let's revisit the 7 Leave No Trace principles.



Let's revisit the Leave No Trace principles. Image: Sputnik

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

It seems like a no-brainer, but next time you decide to head out for a spontaneous weekend away, take a few extra steps to ensure you've done some planning. This includes researching the place you're visiting, in case there are special rules or requirements that you need to follow.

Always take everything you could need in an emergency. This 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 have the potential to negatively impact 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 resistant, long-lasting surfaces is an important one. If you're camping in an area that has designated campsites or platforms, make sure 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. Instead, rock outcrops, sand, gravel, dry grasses, snow, and tent platforms are considered durable to travel across and camp on.



*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 emit, and the greater risk of bushfires that will create. Take all your rubbish and waste out with you in



plastic or leak-proof trash bags. Alternatively, use a spare wheel bin bag – this will keep native wildlife out of your rubbish as well as the stink out of your car.

Ensure that you dispose of human waste properly too. If you're using a portable camp toilet, only rid yourself of waste at a designated waste dump point. Otherwise, pack a trowel with you for bathroom visits. To go to the toilet in the bush responsibly, dig a hole away roughly 20cm deep away from water sources, campsites, and trails – then cover and disguise properly. You shouldn't bury toilet paper, so take it with you in a Ziploc bag until you can dispose of it properly.

Hot water works really well for washing dishes – but if you must use detergent or soap, only choose the biodegradable kind. After you've finished washing your dishes, strain the water to catch food scraps and scatter it at least 50m 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

Despite that last line...

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, it robs the next person of the experience of discovering it too. If you're going to be travelling across an area where you know there is a site of cultural or spiritual significance, it is still possible to absorb it all without touching or interfering in any way.

Another example of leaving what you find is cleaning your boots and tyres thoroughly. This avoids introducing 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 predominant aspect of camping. They add warmth, atmosphere, and a means of cooking delicious meals. However, they pose a risk for the habitats of local wildlife, char and damage the landscape, and – of course – can greater the chance of bushfires.

While a camping stove and lantern don't necessarily provide the same atmosphere of a campfire, they'll help in leaving 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. By doing so, you're keeping the damage to the areas that are arranged for that purpose.

In regards 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 special to observe them. That said, keep a respectful distance so as to not disturb their instinctive and natural behaviours, or frighten them from their own habitat.

It is essential to keep your food secure and not intentionally feed local animals. Foraging for and eating 'human' food can be damaging to both the health and behaviour of native species. This circles back to an earlier-mentioned principle: ensuring you leave everything as you find it. Take all rubbish and food with you to both limit its risk to animals and to avoid an unsightly mess!

If you're keen to observe the animals, bring a pair of binoculars to 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

Whilst we all want to feel a sense of freedom and escape when we head outdoors, we'll always be sharing our space with other people and animals on our travels. With this in mind, here are some things to think about to remain considerate.

- If you bring your pets along, keep their behaviour under control so they don't disturb others. This includes averting them from local wildlife, and preventing them from foraging and digging.
- Consider how bright lighting at night may affect someone else's experience – not to mention how it disturbs the nocturnal animals pre-existing 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. The same goes for loud music; this will keep others from sleeping or enjoying their night.



Keep a respectful distance from wildlife so as to not disturb their instinctive and natural behaviours (shouldn't be hard to do when it comes to snakes!). Image: Sputnik

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 the natural environment in as pristine condition as possible.

Happy adventuring, everyone!



A little more mindfulness means that we can keep the natural environment in pristine condition. Image: Sputnik

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