



Hiking at night is almost a completely new experience from hiking during the day. Even somewhere familiar can feel and look like an altogether different place. Often, we forget that there's a whole world of activity that starts when the sun sets.

Australia has a plethora of native wildlife that comes to life at night, so there's plenty of things to see and hear that will add to the experience.

### **Why you should try night hiking:**

#### **It's a good way to get some fresh air mid-week**

If you find that there's always something getting in the way of your adventure schedule, whether it be running important errands on the weekend, chauffeuring the kids around, or having to work overtime – then we totally feel you.

A mid-week night hike will help clear your mind and give you some fresh air to keep you going until the weekend. It's also a fun alternative to hitting the gym, so you can kill two birds with one stone.

#### **You can see the stars**

What's better than being able to stargaze as you walk? The view of the heavens isn't something you stop to take a look at during your 9 to 5 routine, so this is the perfect opportunity to take in the sights and maybe see if you can pick out a few constellations.



*Night hikes are a good opportunity for some stargazing. Image: Sputnik*

#### **It sharpens your other senses**

As your night vision increases, you'll find that you have to rely on your other senses – such as hearing, smell and touch. You could try to rely on taste as well, but that probably wouldn't go down so well, so maybe stick to the others?

#### **You might get to see some nocturnal wildlife**

As soon as it gets dark, it's party time for many native Australian animals. You might catch glimpses of echidnas, possums, owls, kangaroos, koalas, or bilbies, to name just a few. If you can see some wildlife, then it's likely you can hear them as well. Some animals can kick up *quite* the ruckus, so be prepared so you don't get spooked. If you've ever woken up in the middle of the night to the screechy hissing noises of a possum, or the guttural sounds made by a koala – then you'll know exactly what we mean...



*If you head out when the sun starts to set – you'll get to experience a lot more wildlife.*

*Photo: Ledlenser*



## **Tips for hiking at night time:**

### **1. Start somewhere local**

Probably not the best time to get adventurous... stick to a trail that you've done before or even better – one that you know like the back of your hand.

### **2. Keep it fairly short**

Night hikes aren't the best times to push yourself physically, so keep it fairly short as you also want to leave some time to get back in case it takes longer than you expect.

### **3. Make sure you have reception**

Depending on how far away you go, ensure that your phone has good coverage. A GPS or map is also going to come in handy if you happen to get lost. If necessary take a satellite phone in case you need to call for help.



*Carry a map if your phone doesnt have coverage. Image: Ledlenser*

### **4. Take a mate**

Take along a good mate or partner, as you know what they say? There's safety in numbers. Plus it's more fun to have a hiking buddy to come along on the journey with you. It's also important to let someone know where you're headed in case you get lost.

### **5. Keep the noise down**

Keep in mind that you don't want to scare off or disturb the local animals in the area. Though tempting, now isn't the time for a rowdy singalong or story time.



*Take a friend along for fun – and safety!*

### **6. Keep your wits about you**

As it will obviously be dark, make sure you are minding the path ahead of you. You don't want to trip over, do your ankle in, and have to hobble back to the car before you can even get stuck in!

### **7. Let your eyes adjust to the conditions**

Don't go all in with the brightest setting on your headlamp, not only does it defeat the purpose of enjoying the night environment, it will also disturb the nocturnal animals. Start off with a red night time vision mode, that way you'll have plenty of visibility and your



eyes can adjust to the dark. Also, if you go when the moon is at its fullest you'll naturally have more visibility anyhow.



*By all means, take a headlamp. But let your eyes adjust, and avoid bright lights. Image: Coleman*

## 8. Be careful not to trample on native habitat

This is a pretty obvious one, but it can be easy to put a foot wrong, especially when you first get started night hiking. As always, the Leave No Trace Principles apply, so take care where you put your feet.

## 9. Bring hiking poles to help feel your way

Hiking poles are a good way to safely steady yourself and to help you navigate when you're in low light conditions.



*Hiking poles are going to help you feel your way in low-light conditions. Photo: Deuter*

## 10. Slow and steady

Don't go full throttle at first. Take your time so you can adjust to your surroundings. You're also less likely to trip or trample on something delicate. Once you're comfortable, you can pick up the pace a little.

Remember! Make sure you take the necessary safety measures, prepare properly, and be respectful of native flora and fauna. Happy night hiking everyone!

***Do you have any tips for night hiking adventures? Let us know in the comments below.***