



Guide to Bushwalking

By Harry Cramer

Backpacking

Over the years a lot has been written on the art of bushwalking, by those that made it an art. Some that I have walked with, to keep the weight down in their packs would even go to the lengths of cutting off the handle of their toothbrush.

Having been through the Scouting movement and a leader for 15 years, when giving a talk to a Scout Troop I advise them that some parents have a tendency of assisting in the packing of the pack. With this comes the friendly advice like "You had better take this in case". As a result the pack gets heavier and heavier, but then *they do not have to carry the pack you do*. Keep to your list and keep the weight down.

A lot has happened to the design of camping equipment over the last 15 to 20 years especially with backpacks and tents as well as food. The packs of today are ergonomically designed, and have features that were not thought of on the old style packs. The old style packs, the weight was carried on the shoulders, which became sore after a short distance and padding like towels or pieces of foam were used to pad the shoulders.

A good back pack of today has built in features like, an in-built or internal frame that can be moulded to the shape of the back, compression straps to pull or compress the load, with a fully adjustable harness and a padded waist belt. This padded belt does not go around the waist but around the pelvic girdle and takes the main weight of the pack, so it needs to be tight.

With the old style pack this belt did not exist and as a result the shoulders would take the weight, compressing the spinal column and finally the legs carried the load. With the new design, the weight is transferred directly into the legs and the shoulder straps are there only to guide the load.

Over the years we have strived to supply a pack that meets all criteria that have been listed above and have over time assisted in the improvement and development of such a pack. Unfortunately the DMH brand is no more and this pack was going to disappear.

We have taken the steps to have this pack manufactured and now have them available from our store at a budget price. We can post Australia wide.

The Rhine Back Pack is big enough to *take all your equipment*, being 75 litres. There is no reason when the pack is of sufficient size to have half of the equipment hanging on the out side of the pack tied on with string. This is how expensive equipment is damaged or lost.

The Rhine pack has been tried and tested by schools, Scouts, Guides, and Duke of Edinburgh participants over the years, with over 20,000 of these packs being sold.

The pack with all your equipment, including food and water should not weigh more than one fifth (1/5) of your weight for an adolescent or a quarter (1/4) of your weight for an adult.



Rhine 75 Litre Pack
is only available from
All Camping Supplies

What you must do

Before you set off on a bush walk there are things that you are advised to do. It is well advised to let authorities like the Police or National Parks Office in the area where you are going advised. This can be done by calling in to their office or by phone or even E Mail your trip plan to them. By doing this it shows that you are being responsible and they might even advise you with local knowledge that will assist you like where water is available. What your group needs to do is advise them the route you intend to take and how long you estimate that it will take you and give them a list of your party and contacts. This eliminates a lot of problems that can occur if by chance an accident does happen or you have become overdue to some unforeseen circumstances. It is a good idea to take a PLB or EPIRB with you if available. See note on these on last page on this subject.

Back Packing Tents

These are a lightweight tent designed to be carried in a back pack by bush walkers. These do not have a lot of room, just enough room to sleep. These are usually one or two person tents with the weight being a big consideration, but a rule of thumb 1kg to 1.5kg per person is the usual thing. Tent consists of a Nylon fly with a breathable inner, poly floor with a fibreglass or alloy pole system.



Carrying of the tent can be shared when in a group. It can be split up so each member of the group has a portion of the tent. For example, with a three-man tent, one carries the poles, one the fly and pegs and one the inner of the tent. This is fairly even way to carry this piece of equipment. With a two man tent one carries the inner and pegs and the other the poles and the fly.

Keep the cooking and dining equipment to a minimum. The Australian Army has been using Dixie units with a folding handle for over 90 years. These can be used for boiling water or cooking food on open fire or on a stove and also for eating from.



Keep the load down to a minimum. Think about what you are going to take, make a list, talk to the group and plan what you are going to eat, wear, drink, and sleeping arrangements, and how to carry it all. The main aim is to keep the weight down to a minimum, **remember you have to carry it.**

Bushwalking

There are a lot of young people doing The Duke of Edinburgh Scheme these days that would like more information to assist them in preparing for the bushwalking section of this programme, hence I have written this article.

To enjoy bushwalking there are five golden rules that have to be followed other wise you will not enjoy your selves.

1. Look after your feet, without these you get nowhere.
2. Dress according to the conditions
3. Eat well
4. Have a good comfortable and properly adjusted backpack
5. Have the right sleeping equipment (mat, tent, sleeping bag)

Let us take a look at these five points that I have listed above in closer detail.

1. **Look after your feet.** To go on a hike or bushwalk you have to be able to walk. A good pair of walking shoes or boots is an essential part of your equipment, for the last thing you want are blisters on your feet. If they do occur then it can be a very painful experience. Thick woollen socks are very good way protect your feet. While on foot-care, don't forget to cut your toenails before going bushwalking, especially the big ones. I have seen people that have neglected to do this simple thing and have after the first day blisters have formed under the big toe nails. (A very painful experience)

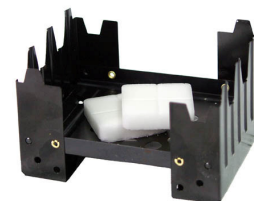
2. **Dress according to the conditions.** Places like Barrington Tops can still get very cold of a night even in summer so take a warm jumper or a fleece. You will find that most bushwalkers walk in shorts, even when raining. Wet pants can cause a lot of body heat loss, which could lead to hypothermia. You are better with quick drying pants rather than jeans as they take a long time to dry once wet.

3. **Food.** Make sure that the food that you take is going to give you enough energy to carry out this physical activity. It is a good idea to take a bag of nuts, cashew, raisins, and smarties, jellybeans etc. in a resealable glad bag. These can be munched on along the way and give you that short term extra energy. Mars bars are very good for this as well, but don't try to live on them, you need something more substantial for main meals. Rice is a very good lightweight meal. This can be dressed up with a beef cube or some curry powder. Noodles and also freeze-dried food can also be considered. There is a large variety of these to cover all tastes and available in 1, 2 and 5 person serves. Tubes of condensed milk are also available. Breakfast could be weet-bix or muesli and make up some milk with powdered milk. Just remember that you don't want food that will spoil. Sit



down and do a menu and work out what you are going to have for each meal and also look at the weight as well. Take the time to plan is the only way. Discuss with those that are going with you. What needs to be cooked and remember no tins as these have to be carried out by you. Resealable glad bags are a good way to portion out meals instead of taking packets.

Cooking can be done over an open fire in most cases but it is advisable also to take a stove as some areas open fires are not allowed. Check also for fire restrictions.



Stoves

There are a few different types of stoves to consider as it must be light weight.

- Solid fuel or Hexamine stove is what the army use and is very efficient way as it is light, folds up to nothing and cheap and very safe.

Please note: I have been told that there is a directive by the Dept of Public Schools in NSW that these stoves are not to be used by students of Public Schools. I have E Mailed the department to get conformation on this ruling but at this stage they have not replied to my request. I will amend this note once I get an answer to my request, if I ever do. Until then check with your co-ordinator to find out if these stoves are acceptable for your school.

- Metho burning stoves are another way of going but personally I do not like them as there have been some nasty accidents with them, plus the fact that you have to carry a large container of fuel for them.
- Another type is gas stoves and there are a variety of these on the market. These are efficient but also add to the weight as you need to take enough gas cylinders to do the trip.
- There are also liquid burning stoves that burn Kerosene, and others that burn shellite or petrol (MSR) and some that work on all forms of



fuel by changing the jet. There are now stoves that can operate on gas or will change to a fuel stove without a conversion kit but these stoves are very expensive (KOVEA).

4. **Backpacks** have already been discussed to some extent. Just make sure that they are adjusted correctly. If by chance rain does occur while hiking some packs are fitted with rain covers. If not separate rain covers are available for back pack. Just remember *green garbage bags*, these are an essential part of the equipment to take. They are strong, waterproof containers that can be used for waterproofing the pack while walking or out side the tent of a night. Float the pack across the stream, a liner for the pack to keep every thing dry including the sleeping bag, and to put your dirty clothes in, and can be also used to collect water. You can also use them as a rain coat. So you can see they have a number of uses, and they don't take up much room and weigh very little.

5. **Having a good nights sleep.** A cold night is the longest night that you will ever endure. Having the correct sleeping equipment is most important. If you don't have a good night sleep then you will not enjoy the outing you will become irritable and become a pain to the rest of the group with your moans etc. An insulation EVA mat is an essential piece of equipment to stop ground cold.

- **Sleeping bags.** This is a subject not to be taken lightly. Choosing the correct sleeping bag for the conditions that you could encounter is essential. The conditions can change dramatically from one day to the next, to such an extent, I have seen snow fall in January on Barrington Tops where we had 40⁰C only days before. There are different types of sleeping bags and there are a range of temperature ratings. These range from a summer type bag through to the depths of winter. Just remember that you are not buying a sleeping bag for the one off event, but for say the next fifteen to twenty years, if it's looked after. One way of assisting in looking after your bag is by the use of a sleeping bag liner. There are cotton as well as silk and these will assist in keeping the sleeping bag clean.
- **Synthetic** type Sleeping Bags have come a long way in the last few years with new types of insulation materials and the one we sell the most is the Roman Palm Passport as this is a -5⁰C Bag and only weighs 1.2kg
- **Down** for the same temperature rating are much more expensive, and unless you are going to get really serious about bushwalking and camping then a synthetic bag will do the job.



If you chose to go to a *down type* sleeping bag, get one that has the construction style of box wall or slant wall type. With these types you can re-position the down and change the temperature rating of the bag by the re-distribution of the down. This type of bag can be used from the middle of summer to the middle of winter with the correct amount of down fill.

It is better to get a good sleeping bag in the beginning than to buy the cheapie that just does not do the job, and then you have to go out and buy the one you should have purchased in the first place. When the cost is spread out over the years of happy camping and the times it is used, it's not very much, but it seems a lot at the time of purchase.

Ground cold is your biggest enemy when camping, and wanting to get a good night's sleep. Just remember that to take full advantage of your sleeping bag, **an insulation mat** of some description must be put under the bag, otherwise you will suffer. Again watch the weight, as an EVA mat is about 1kg lighter than a self-inflating mat. As I stated before, a cold night is the longest night you will endure.



The tent has been covered earlier on page No 2

What you will need to take

When doing a bush walk there will be certain things that you will need. We have already gone through the essentials being

- the back pack, Big enough to take all the equipment (75 litre recommended)
- decent boots ,
- a sleeping bag and insulating mat
- A shelter which in most cases will be a tent.
- A stove of some sort, and fuel

Other items that will be required to take along are

- Wet weather gear in the form of a coat or poncho
- Food and water
- Mess kit and knife fork & spoon in a bag with a tea towel.
- Spare socks 3 pair
- T shirts (no sleeveless tops)
- A warm jumper /Fleece/wool
- Thermals (if in cooler months)
- Underwear
- Swimwear
- Hat and beanie
- Torch preferably Head torch and batteries
- Sun Glasses
- Watch
- Small first aid kit in a re-sealable plastic bag Consisting of

- 5 Band Aids/gauze pads
- Adhesive tape
- Antiseptic Cream
- Stingose or similar
- Medications
- Space Blanket
- Tweezers
- Crêpe Bandage

- Personal Survival Kit
 - Water purification tablets
 - Compass
 - Map of the area
 - Waterproof Matches or lighter
 - Plastic resealable bags –small
 - Whistle
 - Garbage bags - 4
 - Pencil and Paper or note book
 - Sun cream
 - Insect repellent
 - Hand sanitiser
 - Emergency Meal
 - A length strong cord -10m minimum
 - Dental Floss
- Tooth paste & brush
- Deodorant
- Soap in plastic bag
- A small trowel
- Toilet Paper (1/2 roll)
- Female hygiene items as required



- Water containers –at least 2 litre and water
- Small pocket knife – blade no longer than 5cm
- Towel – Light weight& quick drying
- Detergent in a small bottle
- Scourer



EPIRB or PLB

Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon or **Personal Location Beacon** are devices that are used in the time of a life threatening emergency. When they are activated they transmit a signal to a satellite. The satellite then re transmits to the control centre in Canberra the co-ordinates of the transmission who then contact the appropriate origination to carry out the rescue. Once the beacon has been activated do not move from that location. This is important as we have had situations where the beacon has

been activated and the people have kept on moving and this confuses the search operation.

If you are doing a walk in the Blue Mountains it is well advised to take an EPIRB (**Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon**) or PLB (**Personal Location Beacon**) with you and there is no reason not to take one as they are available from the Police Stations at Katoomba and Springwood to bushwalkers for **FREE**. All you have to do is call into the Police Station and fill out a registration form with some form of proof of identity and they will issue one to you. The Phone Number for Katoomba Police Station is (02) 4782 8199.

One thing schools, Scouts, Guides, walking groups or travellers can think about is the **SPOT Units**. These are a multi channel tracking device that can also be used as an Emergency Beacon. These are a lot cheaper than a EPIRB but there is a yearly subscription.

The Spot units have a definite application for hiking groups. The big advantage of the SPOT unit is threefold.

The new SPOT units have six buttons that control the following. If you are interested in the units we can e-mail a detail brochure explaining the unit.

In brief

1. It has an **OK** button. This will send out a signal with message pre loaded to say group is OK
2. It has another button marked **HELP**. This is another field pre loaded saying you need assistance but not life threatening.
3. There is the button that is marked **SOS** which in **Australia is actually 000** and means if you have a life threatening situation and need to be rescued when this button is pushed. (112 Europe & 911 USA)
4. A buttons for pre-arranged message sending,
5. Tracking. This is an optional field that sends out a signal and able to be tracked on Google Maps.
6. Power.

The big advantage over any other unit on the market is it will work anywhere and **does not rely on mobile telephone towers. It is Satellite.**

I hope this article is of assistance to you in the planning for your next bushwalking experience and enjoying the great Australian outdoors