

GRADES OF WALKS

There are very few flat walks in the Blue Mountains. We have inherited a superb network of walking tracks, but many of them are not maintained to a high standard.

On walks both in and outside the Blue Mountains there may be steep climbs and many steps and you may encounter hazards such as uneven, loose and slippery surfaces, creek crossings, and obstacles such as fallen trees and rocks.

Be prepared for sudden weather changes.

It is not easy to grade walks. What is easy for some is difficult for others. The following is a guide. The distance of the walk and the expected weather conditions need to also be considered by individual walkers.

Be aware of your own capabilities.

Grade 1. Fairly flat walk on roads, fire trails and walking tracks.

Grade 2. Fairly flat, but with some rough and/or steep sections, possibly some natural obstacles and some steps.

Grade 3. May include rough/steep sections, many steps, a steep climb and descent, natural obstacles, some off-track walking.

Grade 4. May include more of the above, with a greater degree of difficulty.

Grade 5. We occasionally arrange a walk considered most suited to experienced and very fit walkers. It is likely to include some or all of the following: rough/steep sections, steep climbs and descents, many steps, natural obstacles, off-track walking.

Contact the leader or walks convenor, before attending:

- If this is your first walk
- If you have any doubts or questions
- If the walk is limited in numbers and booking is required.

PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT:

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society Bushwalking Group practises minimal impact bushwalking.

Minimal impact bushwalking means do nothing. Take nothing but photographs. Leave nothing that shows where you have been.

PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT:

Carry a bag for your rubbish. If you find litter left along the track, please remove it.

TREAD SOFTLY:

Use existing tracks. Don't take shortcuts or cut corners on zigzag paths—shortcuts cause erosion. Avoid easily damaged places such as swamps and fragile rock formations. Respect wildlife, large and small.

Membership Enquiries:
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782
Phone 4757 1872 Fax 4757 1753
Email: bmcs@bluemountains.org.au
Website: <http://www.bluemountains.org.au/>

The roar of the waterfall filled our ears as we descended the path between drenched rocks and dripping trees, through swirling mist which hid the valleys and just as rapidly revealed them.

Then, leaning on the rock wall at the end we waited for the cloud to tear apart to show us the waterfall, now deafening us with its fortissimo drumming.

The rain had paused, mountains appeared and disappeared, then the waterfall leaped out at us like a tiger.

Safe on our rock, we marvelled until the rain and cloud descended once more...

(Grace Bayley "Take it Slowly", 1993)



BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Bushwalkers' Guide



Photo: BMCS Bushwalkers in Blue Gum Forest, September 2003

WATCH YOUR SAFETY:

Be equipped for the worst possible conditions you may encounter, and be aware of the weight.

YOU WILL NEED:

Suitable Non-slip Footwear Backpack
Hat Raincoat Warm clothing

Water: 1 litre minimum, more in hot weather
or for long/hard walks

A snack and lunch for all-day walks

Basic First Aid Kit: 2 triangle bandages, 2 elastic
crepe bandages, a space blanket, paper and pencil,
bandaids, personal medication

Small Torch and Matches (for all-day walks)

Whistle

Additional items may include sun screen, field
guides, map, trowel, toilet paper
(make your own list)

FITNESS:

Are you fit enough for the walk? Will you be
affected by any physical limitation? Inform the
leader and discuss any doubts before the walk.

The leader can refuse participation to anyone
he/she considers may present a risk to themselves
or other participants.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY:

Be there on time. Be prepared to start on time.

Hold an introductory circle. Leader will advise
details of the walk. Be prepared to follow 'Plan B'
for weather changes, bushfire threat, etc.

Bushwalks will only proceed with four or more
adults. A large group may be split into two or more
groups with leaders, if necessary.

Leader will appoint a **last person**.

All participants must fill out the walk
attendance sheet. Participants agree to remain with
the rest of the party during the activity and not to
leave the walk without advising the leader.

If necessary, leader will arrange car convoy and
count the number of cars.

DURING THE ACTIVITY

Leader will:

- Have a head count before you start walking.
- Have regular drink and rest breaks to allow
walkers to regroup. Before you start again have a
head count to make sure that everyone is there.
- Ensure everyone is comfortable with the pace and
conditions and that slow or tired walkers are not
left behind. It's easier for fast walkers to slow
down than slow walkers to speed. If you have to
stop and wait, don't start walking as soon as slow
walkers catch up. This is very demoralising.
- Always wait at a track junction for the walkers
behind.

Walkers:

- Stay together. Be prepared to follow the leader's
instructions.
- Stay behind the leader. You may go the wrong
way!
- Stay in front of the last person or you may be left
behind. If you need to leave the track for a
comfort stop, tell the last person.
- Don't allow yourself to become separated from
the group. If you have any difficulties such as
pace, blisters, shortage of water, advise the leader
or last person immediately.
- If you've lost contact with the people in front of
you, don't go off in the wrong direction—stop
and wait.
- If you've lost contact with the people behind you,
tell the leader.
- Stay well back from the edge of cliffs or long
drops (a body length is recommended, more for
children).

AT THE END OF THE ACTIVITY

Ensure that all participants have arrived at the
finishing point.

Thank the leader.

Drive away when sure that all cars start.

MEMBERSHIP: Membership of BMCS
Bushwalking Group is restricted to members of
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc. An
annual bushwalking levy to cover insurance is
payable.

VISITORS: Visitors may take part in walks
subject to the leader's approval and sign an
acknowledgement of risk waiver every time they
attend activities. Visitors are limited to three
walks.

CHILDREN: Children under 16 years of age
must be accompanied by a responsible adult who is
a member. Ratio of children to adults needs to be
considered.

POTENTIAL LEADERS: Our bushwalking
activities rely on a pool of willing and able
volunteer leaders. Talk to the leader or walks
convenor about leadership skills. Ask the leader if
you can assist with navigation for part of the trip to
increase your confidence. A more experienced
leader can help you lead your first walk.

INJURIES AND OTHER INCIDENTS:

If any injury or other incident occurs, tell the
leader. The leader will make note and have this
countersigned by another responsible walker. The
Walks Convenor will be notified as soon as
possible and a Notice of Injury form completed.

EMERGENCY, Minor or Major:

The leader will consult two other responsible
walkers, decide on a course of action, especially if
the group is to be split up or there is to be an
enforced overnight stay in the bush, and appoint
these two as his/her deputies. The leader will tell
the group what the situation is and if necessary
declare all property, food, first aid, torches etc.
common property to be allocated and used as the
leader deems fit and proper to the best group
advantage.

Any mobile phone calls, distress messages, etc,
should be made by the leader, to avoid confusion
with relatives, police or search and rescue
personnel.