

GRAND STRZELECKI TRACK PROTOCOLS

ABOUT THE TRACK: The Grand Strzelecki Track is Class 4 under the Australian Standard. The Class 4 Standard includes basic foot tracks with no infrastructure and requires walkers to be self-sufficient, take responsibility for their own safety and have map reading and navigation skills (although the track is generally well marked). The remote upper Billy's Creek is graded difficult and part of Macks Creek is graded medium. These walks include some narrow foot track, steep slopes with no steps and creek crossings with no bridges. Other parts of the track are graded medium to easy, so for your own enjoyment and safety choose a walk that suits your skill and fitness level.

DO NOT LIGHT FIRES: **Wood fires are prohibited on the Grand Strzelecki Track.** Fuel stoves are the only acceptable method of cooking and heating.

BE SELF RELIANT: Carry with you the things you need for your comfort and safety. For shelter, carry a lightweight tent, swag or flysheet. You can save damage to the environment by being prepared to share a tent or swag. Carry enough dried food for at least one extra day.

BE PREPARED/BE SAFE: Always carry a First Aid kit. Carry clothing and equipment to suit the worst possible conditions you are likely to encounter. Cold, wet, windy weather is common at any time and occasional snowfalls may be encountered from April to October. Avoid camping or lingering under tall trees, especially in fire damaged areas, snow or high winds. Wet logs and rocks are slippery, so watch your footing. Maintain a hand hold or use a dead branch or collapsible pole as a walking stick where footing is slippery or unstable. Don't cross flooded creeks. If stepping on wet rocks, socks provide better grip than boots or bare feet; carry a pair for crossing creeks and change afterwards. Heed weather forecasts before commencing your walk. Avoid being in the bush in periods of extreme fire danger or storms. We recommend you sterilize creek & tank water before drinking (it is not tested). Carry a mobile phone, but use it only for summoning aid in an emergency and keep it switched off until needed. An EPERB (available from camping stores) is also recommended especially if walking alone.

FIRE SAFETY: Avoid being in the bush in periods of extreme fire danger. In the unlikely event that a fire approaches unexpectedly,

1. Remain calm and do not try to out-run the fire.
2. Seek shelter in either 1) a low place such as a running stream or the bottom of a gully where the vegetation is moist and as sparse as possible, or 2) a road culvert, or 3) a recently burnt area with little vegetation. Alternatively a clear area such as a road or quarry will provide some protection, especially within deep wheel ruts, a cutting or a table drain.
3. Clear any flammable material around you.
4. Lie face down and cover all exposed skin including head, face and hands preferably with natural material (wool or cotton). Alternatively cover exposed skin with soft earth or anything to shield you from the heat.
5. Remain there and keep your face to the ground until the fire has passed.
6. Only as a last resort, if you can see an area where flames are less than your height and there is little burning material beyond, take a deep breath, cover your head and walk briskly through the flames to a safer area.

EMERGENCY CONTACT: Make sure you leave clear details about your walk on the Grand Strzelecki Track with family and friends prior to departure. These details should include your expected date and time of return, number of walkers in your party and your mobile phone number. Please note that the Grand Strzelecki Track is located in a remote area of Gippsland and mobile phone coverage cannot be guaranteed. **In any emergency dial 000** and provide your location with GPS coordinates if possible. **If you have no mobile phone signal, dial 112** to access emergency services from any available carrier.

BE COURTEOUS TO OTHERS: The sound of radios, CD players, mobile phones and similar devices is out of place in the natural environment. Leave the electronics at home. Ensure your behaviour and activities don't disturb or offend others. Always keep voices to a minimum. Camp as far away from other groups as conditions allow. Leave gates as you find them. When you open a gate, make sure the last person through knows it has to be closed.

CARRY IN, CARRY OUT: Don't carry glass bottles and jars, cans, drink cartons lined with aluminium foil and excess packaging. If you can't resist carrying such things, don't leave them in the bush. Remember, if you can carry a full container in, you can easily carry the empty one out. Remove all your rubbish including food scraps, paper, plastic, aluminium foil and empty containers. Don't burn or bury rubbish. Fires are prohibited and buried rubbish may be dug up and scattered by animals. Digging also disturbs the soil, causing erosion and encouraging weeds. Carry a plastic bag for your rubbish. If you find litter left by irresponsible people along the track or around a rest area, please remove it. Show your care for the environment, even if others don't. When walking in scrubby country, do not strap closed-cell sleep mats or items in plastic bags outside your pack. The bush will be littered with pieces of foam and plastic.

CHOOSE OVERNIGHT STOPS CAREFULLY: **There are designated areas along the Grand Strzelecki Track that may be used for one night if necessary.** Camping in any other location is discouraged, except in an emergency. Tents must be erected on open ground. Removal or trampling of vegetation is not permitted. If there is no other alternative, erect your tent on a wide section of the track but be aware that vehicles may occasionally use 4WD tracks. Use a waterproof groundsheet or tent with a sewn-in floor and you won't have to worry about surface runoff in wet weather. Avoid the temptation to dig drains around your tent. This practice damages the environment and is not acceptable. If you have to remove branches or rocks to create a tent site, replace them before you leave. Leave your campsite pristine. After a few days it should be impossible to see where you were camped.

TREAD SOFTLY: Use existing tracks; don't create new ones. On zigzag paths, don't cut corners as this creates unsightly damage that leads to erosion. Avoid easily damaged places such as rainforest gullies, swamps, grasslands and fragile rock formations. Wade through waterlogged sections of tracks; don't create a skein of new tracks around them. Except in really rough terrain, wear lightweight, soft-soled walking shoes or jogggers rather than heavy boots. Become proficient in bush navigation. If markers are missing or the track is difficult to navigate, report this on your return.

PROTECT PLANTS AND ANIMALS: Try not to disturb wildlife. Remember, you are the trespasser. Give snakes a wide berth and leave them alone. They have more right to be there than you do. Watch where you put your feet. Walk around delicate plants. Don't feed birds and animals around the rest areas or they may become pests. Unnatural food can be harmful to many species.

BE HYGENIC: Try to use toilets where available (you will need to provide your own toilet paper). If you have to go to the toilet in the bush, ensure you are at least 50 metres from creeks. Bury all faeces and toilet paper at least 15cm deep. In snow, dig through the snow first, then dig a hole in the ground. Carry out things that won't easily decompose, such as used tampons, sanitary pads and condoms. Carry a lightweight plastic trowel or a large aluminium tent peg to make digging easier.

KEEP WATER PURE: Wash cooking and eating utensils well back from the edge of creeks so waste water falls on soil where it will be absorbed. Prevent soap, detergent or toothpaste from getting into natural water systems. Similarly, when washing cooking utensils, don't use detergent and don't let oils and food scraps get into creeks. Always swim downstream from where you get your drinking water.

BE COMFORTABLE: Have a dry change of clothing available at all times. Leeches inhabit wet areas. They are not dangerous and if attached can be easily removed with salt, so carry a small supply for this purpose. Tuck trousers into socks when walking through wet areas and avoid standing still in one place. Insect repellent containing 40 % DEET applied to boots, clothing and bare skin also helps. Sleep soundly; no animals will attack you in the night! If you hear an unearthly snorting growl, it will be a male Koala proclaiming his territory!

RESPECT OUR PARTNERS: Much of the Grand Strzelecki Track passes through patches of plantation and diverse native forests managed by a private plantation forestry company, and would not be possible without their contribution. While all native forest is protected, plantation works and forestry traffic may occasionally be encountered. Respect people's rights. Heed all signage and protocols when passing through forestry land, and check the website for updates before commencing your walk. Don't enter adjoining private property without permission. In national parks, abide by park rules and encourage others to do so too.

RESPECT INDIGENOUS HERITAGE: Many places have spiritual or cultural significance for our Indigenous communities. Treat such places with consideration and respect. Leave Indigenous relics as you find them.

HELP US OUT: Report safety hazards or maintenance requirements on your return, using the feedback sheet provided on the website www.grandstrzeleckitrack.org.au and in map boxes (mark locations on a map, or provide GPS coordinates if possible). Report illegal activities such as trail bike use, rubbish dumping or removal of vegetation. Report the location of introduced pest plants or animals you see. Report the location of native species of interest such as Bandicoots, Quolls, large forest owls, Platypus or Koalas (a photo would be nice!). Offer suggestions that will improve safety or the experience for future users.

ENJOY YOUR TREK!