



Bushwalker Code

Mt Hotham Alpine Resort and the surrounding Alpine National Park are set amidst a uniquely diverse alpine landscape. A variety of tracks and trails access some of Australia's best views, unique flora and fauna and some of the region's richest history.

Whilst bushwalking in the resort and surrounds walkers have a responsibility to protect and preserve the natural and cultural values of the landscape. You also have a responsibility for the safety of yourself, those in your care and for other bushwalkers. This is a guide to help you adequately prepare for a safe, responsible and an enjoyable bushwalking experience.

Walker Safety - Bushwalking Season

Mt Hotham's Bushwalking Season is from the November Melbourne Cup Weekend to mid May.

The best months for walking in the Hotham region are from November through to April. Weather conditions can still change rapidly, snowfalls and blizzards can occur at any time of the year. Whilst bushwalking in the alpine environment be equipped for all types of weather.

Be Informed

- Research your trip – Check out the walking tracks and trails information on the Mt Hotham Track Notes and Parknotes. Visit websites, www.mthotham.com.au and www.parkweb.vic.gov.au
- Choose walks that suit your abilities and fitness levels.
- Check weather conditions before you leave. Weather can quickly change whilst remote areas have very few facilities or services. For weather forecasts and warnings visit the Bureau of Meteorology website: <http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/mounthotham.shtml>
- Contact the local Mt Hotham Resort Management Office (open Monday to Friday). Email mhar@mthotham.com.au, or telephone 03 5759 3550 or local Parks office about local conditions, tracks, river and stream levels and possible fire danger.
- On longer walks carry a good topographical map and compass, even a GPS – plan and know your route.

Be Prepared

- Pack wind and waterproof jackets and gloves in case of weather changes.
- Wear strong footwear.
- Pack sufficient food and water.
- Don't travel alone in more isolated and remote areas – a minimum of three is suggested.
- Be Sunsmart. Always wear a hat, long-sleeve shirt, sunglasses, sunscreen and plenty of water.
- Carry a first aid kit and torch.
- Let someone know where you are going, your route and estimated arrival time.
- You are responsible for your own safety and the safety of others in your care.
- Make sure your mobile phone is fully charged and know emergency response numbers "000" or "112".

Fire Safety

It is safest not to walk on declared Extreme or Severe bushfire days. Bushfires started by walkers or campers can cause extensive damage and endanger life and property.

Because of high fire risk it is recommended only fuel stoves are allowed. Gas or liquid fuel stoves must not be used on declared Extreme, Severe or Total Fire Ban days.

In high fire danger periods it is best to be prepared.

- Be informed of updated forecasts and weather information. Listen to radio or visit Bureau of Meteorology website.
- Be aware of location at all times. In the case of any emergency response it is important to know your exact location.
- Have a safe emergency escape route.

If you see a bushfire, report it immediately to "000".

- If you are in no immediate danger promptly call someone and inform them of your intentions.
- Be sure of your safe emergency escape route. Make sure it is away from the direction which the fire is heading. Be aware that fire moves rapidly because of wind or slope conditions.
- Do not try to cross in front of the head of the fire.
- Do not try to out-run a fire uphill.
- Try to move out of the path of a fire and down slope to the back of the fire.
- Watch wind direction and speed and how it may affect the character of the fire.
- Seek shelter from flames and radiant heat.
- Find the largest possible clear bare area, rocks with little or no vegetation are ideal.
- Get low to the ground in a depression or behind rocks and cover yourself until the fire passes.
- If safely accessible, deep pools in streams with little surrounding vegetation or overhanging trees can offer some level of protection.
- If available, seek burnt ground, be aware of burning logs or stumps and falling branches and trees.

Emergency Response

Know emergency number and contacts.

- "000" for State Emergency Service, Police, Ambulance, Country Fire Authority.

Know your location - Be aware of your location at all times.

- In case of an emergency response your position will need to be given to emergency services.
- Should weather conditions turn poor a safe exit route may need to be carefully considered.

Safe Exit Routes – Consider emergency exits, consider **travel times, distances and conditions.**

- How long does it take to drive to the track head from your original departure point?
- What are road conditions like (rough, high fuel loadings etc.) on declared Extreme or Severe bushfire days?
- How long does it normally take to walk back to your vehicle or track heads?
- What could be alternative exit points for high risk days and scenarios?
- Know where you are on the map and be familiar with exit roads and terrain.
- Park vehicle pointed out in readiness for an emergency exit scenario.
- Delegate who in the walking party will have car keys and where they will be kept.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phone reception is generally available along most of the walking tracks, however if difficulty is encountered the broad open points on spurs (not in gullies) generally obtain good mobile signals. The Telstra tower is situated near the summit of Mt Hotham, any point with a good line to this tower receives a good signal.

Minimal Impact

The Victorian Alps is of special ecological value, alpine ecosystems have a significant number of threatened and endemic species. To ensure the health of alpine ecosystems the following minimal impact guidelines are recommended to all bushwalkers.

Keeping on Track

- Keep walking parties to a minimum, four to six is ideal.
- Stay on track – walking on edges and cutting corners increases vegetation damage and erosion. Even if muddy stay on the track.
- Avoid sensitive vegetation – stay on rocks or hard ground where possible, avoid walking in sensitive vegetation areas such as bogs, shrubs and cushion plants.
- If possible avoid popular holiday periods when walking traffic is high. This creates less stress on the flora and fauna and is a much more enjoyable experience.

Minimise Rubbish – Leave nothing but footprints

- Carry out all rubbish – only carry in what you need. Don't carry glass bottles and jars, cans, aluminum foil or excess packaging. Small items, such as foil, food wrappers and orange peelings are unsightly.
- Do not burn rubbish.
- Carry in a plastic bag for your rubbish. If you find litter left by others, please remove it and leave the environment in a better condition for others.
- Do not bury rubbish – digging disturbs soil encouraging weeds and causing erosion.
- Do not discard food scraps – fruit seeds, such as apples easily become weeds. Food scraps encourage feral animals and can cause nutritional disorders and aggressive behaviour amongst native fauna.

Water Quality

Mt Hotham is located at the headwaters of four major rivers. To maintain and protect the high water quality of the alpine ecosystems and downstream, the following principles must be followed:

- Do not wash in streams and lakes. Detergents, toothpaste and soap (even biodegradable products) are harmful to water life.
- Do not throw food scraps into water.
- Use established toilets whenever possible, if not possible bury faecal waste at least 100 metres away from watercourses, camping areas, and walking tracks. Bury in a hole at least 15cm deep using hand trowel or stick. Make sure all waste and paper is covered and mixed with soil to aid decomposition and discourage animals. Carry out nappies, sanitary pad and tampons in a plastic bag.

All drinking water should be carried in or collected from taps where available within the Resort. Two to three litres of water per person per day should be carried on longer walks.

If water is taken from springs or streams it should be boiled for at least five to ten minutes, or water purifiers from camping stores could be used.

Snakes, Wasps and Ants

Snakes, European wasps and a variety of ants have the potential to cause harm. Bushwalkers previously diagnosed with anaphylaxis or allergic reactions to ant and wasp stings must carry appropriate medication such as an epipen. Ants can be found throughout the summer months whilst European wasps are generally found from late January to February.

Snakes are generally seen from November to May. If seen, they must not be disturbed and should be given a wide berth. Snakes are protected by law.

Overnight Walks

Camp only at authorised campsites. Do not create a new site unless this is unavoidable. Many locations in the Alpine National Park have designated camping areas (see *Parknotes*). Camping is not permitted in huts; they are generally for emergency shelter only.

If you are going on more than a day long walk minimise your impact by taking these additional items with you:

- A gas fuel stove for cooking.
- A good quality tent with sewn-in floor and insect netting.
- Hand trowel to bury waste.

Huts & Cultural Heritage Code

The huts, buildings and aboriginal and non-aboriginal historic sites of the alpine area contain important cultural values to the State and its people and are protected by law.

Enjoy visiting the huts, their settings and the stories that they might tell.

- Do not use for overnight accommodation, huts are for temporary shelter only.
- Never rely on a hut for shelter.
- Do not remove any items or objects.
- Close all doors and windows securely on leaving.
- Light fires when only absolutely necessary.
- Keep fires small and in existing fireplace.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Always extinguish fires properly on leaving.

Spargo's Hut is listed on the State Heritage Register for its cultural and historical importance to the people of Victoria. Specific guidelines must be followed.

- No camping or overnight staying in, or in the vicinity of the building.
- **Strictly no fires** in the hut or surrounding area.
- Report any apparent damage to the Resort Management Board.
- Enjoy the pioneering spirit of Bill Spargo.

Historic sites and features include a diverse range of places from aboriginal occupation areas, mine tunnels, abandoned machinery, water races and hut ruins – all are protected.

Do not souvenir, remove, or disturb any artefacts, objects or structure. Leave undisturbed.

For more information on Mt Hotham's Iconic Tracks & Trails, visit www.mthotham.com.au. For Resort track & trail conditions, email mhar@mthotham.com.au, or telephone 03 5759 3550 during business hours.

We hope you enjoy the walking experience.