



## **RAMBLERS SYDNEY**

a WEA Sydney club

# **WALKING WITH RAMBLERS**

## **A GUIDE FOR MEMBERS**

WEA Ramblers are lucky to live in one of the most beautiful, varied and easily accessed walking environments in the world. Our volunteer leaders offer a wide choice of walks ranging from historical city walks, to rambles around the many harbour and coastal tracks, to hard bushwalks in the National Parks—and pretty well everything in between! The following guidelines are important for both your enjoyment and your safety, so please read them carefully.

### **PREPARING FOR A WALK**

- Members are welcome to join as many walks as they want. However, it's very important to ensure that you are fit enough for the degree of difficulty of the walk. The Walks Program contains an explanation of the grading system we use as well as a brief description of each walk, so please read this information carefully before setting out. Note especially the grade assigned to your chosen walk, and any specific challenges the leader has identified. Consider how the weather might affect the walking conditions and whether there are possible exit points. If you are new to walking or are uncertain of your fitness, it's a good idea to select Grade 1 or 2 walks in the first instance, and then move on to more challenging ones as you gain confidence and fitness.
- Plan your transport connections carefully so that you can be confident of arriving on time for the start of the walk. Leaders generally start their walks promptly and don't wait for late arrivals. The Transport Infoline ([www.transportnsw.info](http://www.transportnsw.info) or phone 131 500) is a useful resource for finding connections from your home to the starting or joining point of the walk. Please check if there is any trackwork scheduled, particularly on weekends.
- When using trains, the group usually travels in the second car from the front unless otherwise indicated.
- Most Ramblers walks use public transport to get to and from the walk. However, if car pooling is recommended, contribute to car costs if you are a passenger in another member's vehicle.
- Unless advised otherwise in the Walks Program or you have a query, there's generally no need to contact the leader in advance—just turn up at the meeting point at the allotted time. However, for your first three walks with Ramblers, we ask that you contact the leader in advance, to discuss the walk's suitability. Also, during extreme weather conditions you may want to check whether the walk will go ahead (see below).

Make sure you are suitably dressed and equipped for the particular walk and capable of completing it. The leader has the right to refuse to take anyone who might jeopardise the safety of the group.

### **WHAT TO BRING**

- It is essential to carry sufficient water for the conditions of the walk, generally a minimum of one litre, or two litres or more in hotter conditions. Dehydration is a real risk, and inexperienced walkers often underestimate how much water they need, even in cooler conditions. Although you can sometimes refill your bottle along the way, this isn't always possible, so make sure you have enough water with you when you set off. In hot weather it is a good idea also to carry an electrolyte replacer, such as Gatorade® or staminade®, to replace salts lost through sweating.
- Carry your food (packed lunch and snacks) with you for the walk. We usually stop for a short morning tea break and then lunch along the way. Though there may be a cafe at the end of some of the walks, during the walk you will usually have to rely on what you have with you.
- Wear strong walking shoes or boots, and make sure that the soles have a good grip. Walking sandals may be OK for street walking, but not for bush tracks. Don't wear new shoes that have not been broken in on shorter walks.
- Use a backpack and place all your belongings in it so that your hands are free. Over the shoulder bags/packs are not acceptable for bushwalks or coastal walks involving rock hopping, as you will sometimes need **both** hands free.
- Other essential items of equipment include a first aid kit (see the Walks Program for recommended contents; a selection of first aid kits is also available from St John Ambulance), sunscreen, hat and appropriate clothing for the conditions of the walk, including a waterproof jacket or poncho if there is a chance of rain. If walking in hills or mountains, be aware conditions can change quite suddenly and temperatures may drop by several degrees, so it's always advisable to take raingear and a spare warm layer, whatever the forecast.
- You might also like to carry a whistle, torch, maps and compass, though none of these items is regarded as essential, unless specifically advised. Some people find walking poles useful, especially in slippery conditions and/or steep terrain. Many people now carry their mobile phone with them. If you do, please use your phone only if essential.
- Remember to bring a sense of humour and adventure. Our leaders are all volunteers and rely on your co-operation to make the walk a success.

### ***DURING THE WALK***

- Follow the leader's instructions. Remember, your leader has your welfare at heart, but also has to keep in mind the enjoyment and safety of the group as a whole. Be courteous, co-operative and helpful to other walkers in the group.
- At the beginning of the walk the leader will give the group some more information about what to expect on the walk and pass around Attendance Sheets for Members and Temporary Members. Everyone needs to sign the appropriate sheet and give an emergency contact number so that a relevant person can be contacted if you have an accident or become ill during the walk.
- Read the Risk Waiver on the Attendance Sheet and note any specific additional warnings the leader has given. The Club holds public liability insurance but not personal accident insurance. You are at all times responsible for your own safety when deciding to walk with the Club. Consider the conditions you are likely to be walking in and exercise due care.
- Keep behind the leader and try to maintain a line of sight with people in front and behind, while allowing sufficient distance between yourself and the walker in front so that you are not injured

by branches flicking back. If you lose sight of the person behind, let the leader know so that the walk can be halted to allow everyone to catch up.

- On bush tracks, or when there is a large group, the leader usually appoints an experienced walker to act as a 'tail' whose job it is to stay behind the last walker at the back of the group. Don't leave the track, or fall behind the tail for any reason without advising him/her first. If you do need to leave the track for a few minutes, let the tail know and leave your pack on the track.
- Don't allow yourself to become separated from the group. If you are experiencing any difficulty, such as the pace, blisters or shortage of water, advise the leader immediately or tell the person acting as tail if the leader is too far ahead for you to catch up.
- Cross roads safely. Cross in groups, using traffic lights or pedestrian islands and crossings where available.
- Consider other people and walk single file on busy footpaths or on shared pedestrian/cycle ways.
- Generally you should not leave the walk early, unless pre-arranged, but if it is necessary you must tell the leader and sign off on the Attendance Sheet. You must accept the leader's decision to send someone with you.
- Respect the bush. Try not to disturb wildlife and take all rubbish with you.
- At the end of the walk, remember to thank the leader.

### **TEMPORARY MEMBERS (VISITORS)**

Members are welcome to bring a visitor, known as a Temporary Member, on a Club walk, providing they have permission in advance from the walk leader to do so. The leader will want to know what walking

experience your visitor has to ensure the walk will be suitable for them. After the visitor completes three walks with the Club we ask that they become a member if they want to continue walking with us.

### **WALKS DURING EXTREME WEATHER**

- Ramblers walks are rarely cancelled, but leaders may cancel a walk without notice when extreme weather conditions are forecast. Examples are Total Fire Ban days; days of severe, extreme or catastrophic fire risk ratings; or when the forecast indicates extreme heat, significant storms, heavy rainfall or flooding. National Park and track closures may also prevent a planned walk from proceeding.
- If you are in any doubt as to whether a walk you are intending to join will take place, contact the leader the evening before to find out if it is going ahead. If you don't feel it would be safe, don't go. The forecast on the evening news will give a good indication of any anticipated extreme weather conditions. If you have Internet access, you can check fire danger ratings on the Rural Fire Service website [rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://rfs.nsw.gov.au) and park closures on the NPWS website [environment.nsw.gov.au](http://environment.nsw.gov.au), and you can Google the weather. Leaders will do everything they can to obtain up-to-date information, but parks/tracks can be closed without warning and it may take some hours for websites to be updated.
- Sometimes a leader may be able to offer a modified walk, or an alternative one in another area. This could involve different transport arrangements and is another reason why it is a good idea to ring the leader the evening before to avoid a wasted journey.

**HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY WALK!**

Information is also available on the Club website: [www.wearamblers.org.au](http://www.wearamblers.org.au)