



Minimal impact 4WD touring

Four-wheel drive touring is a great way to enjoy the tremendous variety of outdoor experience offered by Victoria's parks, forests and other reserves.

An extensive track network gives 4WD access for a range of activities such as camping, walking, hunting, fishing, horse riding or just going bush.

The natural beauty of Victoria's bush attracts more and more visitors each year. The increasing numbers of visitors have the potential to cause serious damage to the natural environment.

Escapes from campfires, expansion of campsites, trampling and cutting of vegetation and deterioration of roads and tracks have all become more common.

Just one person "bush bashing" can do enormous environmental damage and give four-wheel driving a bad name.

Fortunately many visitors have adopted a new ethic about their use of natural areas. By learning to 'tread lightly' in the bush, you can minimise the damage to the natural environment and reduce the need for restrictions on visitor numbers, and track or campsite closures.



This leaflet is designed to help you experience and share the beauty of the bush by using minimal impact techniques. Some – in particular those to do with fire and vehicle use – carry the weight of law. All must be followed if we want to continue four-wheel driving in the bush.

What does the law say?

Vehicles may only be driven on formed roads and vehicle tracks. Tracks created informally by vehicles, and walking tracks are NOT roads. Management tracks are closed to private vehicles to ensure sensitive areas are not damaged and to enable other visitors to enjoy their recreation without the intrusion of vehicles.

Vehicles are prohibited "off-road" (including beaches) and on closed roads. Off-road driving is illegal and some roads may be closed seasonally for reasons of safety, weather, or to minimise erosion. They are usually signposted or enforced by barriers.

Drivers must be licensed.

Vehicles must be road registered and roadworthy. Recreation registered vehicles are not permitted.

Minimal Impact Driving

- ◆ **Stay on the track.** Drive your vehicle only on roads that are open to the public. Never "bush bash" or drive on closed roads. Off-road driving is a major cause of erosion and vegetation loss.
- ◆ **Obey all track closures** and regulatory signs.
- ◆ **Remove fallen trees** or limbs from roads or report the obstruction to DSE or Parks Victoria – don't create a new track by driving around it.
- ◆ **Drive lightly.** Stay off tracks when they are wet and muddy, or when they have been recently graded. They are easily cut up, and repairing the damage is expensive or can result in track closures.
- ◆ **Minimise damage** by avoiding steep tracks on erodible soils in winter and during wet weather. Steep slopes, water and vehicular traffic are responsible for much of the erosion evident on tracks.
- ◆ **Plan to use an alternative route** if roads are wet and your vehicle is likely to cause damage, or wait until roads are dry before travelling.
- ◆ **Avoid wheel spin and churning up the track.** Wheel ruts can quickly become water channels which cause soil erosion and make tracks impassable for other users.

- ♦ **Winching.** If you need to winch your vehicle use a tree protector to protect trees from damage. Use wheel chains only as a last resort.
- ♦ **Cross rivers and streams slowly.** Only cross where a clearly marked crossing exists. Use existing entry and exit points where bridges and culverts are not provided. Check that the depth is safe before crossing.
- ♦ Be prepared to spend a few minutes filling holes or repairing water run-offs to save further damage or erosion.

Respect the enjoyment of others:

- ♦ People visit the bush for many reasons. Respect the rights of other visitors to peace and solitude in the bush and avoid noisy driving. The noise of your vehicle could spoil the enjoyment of other visitors.
- ♦ Keep convoy sizes to a maximum of 10 vehicles.
- ♦ Should you meet people horse riding, walking or cycling – slow down, stop or steer well clear of them. Covering people in dust, or having to stop in a hurry, can be very unpleasant for others.
- ♦ Remember, loud music, generators, chainsaws and trail bikes disturb other people and wildlife.
- ♦ Generators are permitted in many bush areas, but are prohibited in most parks and reserves. Where permitted, be considerate with location and use.

Rubbish, it's your responsibility

- ♦ **If you've carried it in, carry it out.** Carry out all your rubbish, including those easy-to-forget items like silver paper, plastic wrappers and orange peel which won't easily decompose.
- ♦ **Don't burn or bury rubbish.** Rubbish is likely to be dug up and scattered by possums and other animals and may injure them. Repeated digging by campers disturbs soil and encourages weeds and erosion. Bring bags so you can take your rubbish out with you
- ♦ **Other people's rubbish.** If you have the misfortune to come across other people's rubbish, do the bush a favour and pick that up too.

Campfires

Wood fires may be lit in fireplaces for cooking and warmth in most parks, forests and public land, but a number of restrictions apply to ensure that fires do not escape and fireplaces are safely constructed.

On days of **TOTAL FIRE BAN** all fires in the open air are prohibited. (This includes portable gas or liquid fuelled stoves in tents, tent type trailers and vehicles).

There are five fire ban districts in Victoria and it is your responsibility to know if a total fire ban is declared.

Contact local DSE or CFA offices. If in any doubt about the safety of lighting a fire, **please don't light it**.

♦ Always try to use a fuel stove when camping.

Compared with campfires, fuel stoves are cleaner, a lot easier to use in wet weather, they cook faster and don't scar the landscape.

If you must have a campfire:

♦ Observe the relevant fire lighting regulations:

- in National and State Parks and most other Reserves, fires must be in a properly constructed fireplace.
- elsewhere, a built-up fireplace of stone, metal or concrete, or a trench at least 30 cm deep is satisfactory. Previously used sites are preferred.
- the fire must be no bigger than 1 square metre.
- 3 metres around the fire must be clear (1.5 metres for generators and gas or liquid fuelled appliances used in the open).
- the fire must not be left unattended.

- ♦ **Use only dead fallen wood.** Standing trees, even dead ones are a home for wildlife and a part of the scenery. Do not cut down or damage standing trees or vegetation.



- ♦ **Firewood is in short supply in many areas.** Gather firewood well away from your camp and use it sparingly, or better still, bring your own.
- ♦ **Be absolutely sure the fire is out.** Before you leave, feel the ground underneath the coals. If it is still warm the fire is not out. Put it out with water, not soil.

'No-trace' camping

With modern camping equipment, you can leave a campsite looking as if you had never been there.

- ♦ **Look for low impact campsites.** Sandy or hard surfaces are better than boggy or grassed areas. Camp at an existing campsite rather than a new one, and keep at least 20 metres away from watercourses and the track. Spend only one or two nights at each campsite.
- ♦ **Use modern camping equipment.** Use waterproof tents (with floors and tent poles) and foam sleeping-mats to minimise damage to camping areas. Digging trenches around tents is damaging, and unnecessary if the tents are erected on a well-drained or raised site.



♦ **Leave campsites better than you found them** by removing rubbish and dismantling unnecessary or unsafe fireplaces.

♦ **Where there is a toilet, please use it.**

♦ **In areas without toilets, bury your faecal waste.** Choose a spot at least 100 metres away from campsites and watercourses. In high-use areas and river valleys without toilets carry a portable toilet in your vehicle along with your other camping gear.

Washing

♦ **Don't wash in streams and lakes.** Detergents, tooth paste and soap (even biodegradable types) harm fish and waterlife.

Wash 50 metres away from streams and lakes, and scatter the washwater here so that it filters through the soil before returning to the stream. Use gritty sand and a scourer instead of soap to clean dishes. Don't throw food scraps into streams or lakes.



The 4WD Touring Code

♦ **Stay on the track and drive lightly:** Drive only on roads that are open to the public. Never bush bash or create new tracks. Avoid using muddy tracks.

♦ **Plan your trip – think safety:** Check on your proposed route and road conditions before leaving.

♦ **All native plants and animals are protected:** Do not cut down or damage standing trees or plants. Leave wildlife alone and do not disturb their homes.

♦ **Think of others:** Respect others' rights to peace and solitude in the bush. Respect landowners' rights and get permission to travel across private land.

♦ **Leave no litter:** Take your rubbish home.

♦ **Take care with firearms:** Firearms are not permitted in most National Parks, State Parks and special reserves. Check DSE or Parks Victoria offices if unsure.

♦ **Camp carefully:** Practise "minimal impact" camping.

♦ **Join a 4WD Club** and support responsible 4WD touring.

Enjoy your visit: Take a last look before leaving an area – Will the next visitor know that you have been there?

Plan your trip – think safety

- Maintain your vehicle in a mechanically sound condition and be fully equipped.
- Carry sufficient food and water in case of an emergency.
- In remote areas travel with another vehicle and leave details of your proposed trip with a responsible person.
- Before leaving on a trip, check road conditions with the local DSE office (for trips into State forest) or Parks Victoria (for trips into National & State Parks), be aware of weather forecasts and make sure your maps are up to date.

When driving, be prepared for the unexpected. Timber trucks, hikers, horse riders, cyclists and native animals may also be sharing your chosen track.

Track Classification

To assist drivers in choosing a track to suit their ability, tracks have been classified by surface type, vehicle type and the drivers experience required.

• **Easy.** Mostly unsealed roads. Suitable for novice drivers. Vehicles can be low clearance with single range and road tyres.

• **Medium.** Includes some sections of steep and/or rocky/slippery/sandy track sections. Possible water crossings. Suitable for medium clearance vehicles with dual range and all terrain or road tyres. Recommended that drivers have experience or 4WD training, recommended to be done in groups of vehicles.

- **Hard.** Includes frequent steep and/or rocky/slippery/sandy track sections. Possible water crossings. Suitable for medium to high clearance vehicles with dual range and all terrain tyres. Recommended for drivers with reasonable experience or 4WD training, to be done in groups of vehicles.

- **Expert.** Frequent steep and/or rocky/slippery/sandy track sections. Drivers with extensive experience and advanced training should only attempt as there are several technical challenges. Suitable for high clearance vehicles with dual range and tyres suitable for terrain. Recommended to be done in groups of four or more vehicles.

Other Useful Contacts

The Victorian Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs can provide information about 4WD club activities and events, 4WD driver training programs, and track conditions:

- Victoria Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs Inc.
PO Box 596 Balwyn North VIC 3104
☎ 9857 5209
<http://www.vafwdc.org.au/>

For more information

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for managing Victoria's State Forest. For further information and maps about where to go in State forest, contact DSE's Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

Visit DSE's website

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>
then select "Forestry".

Parks Victoria Contacts

For further information about where to go in national parks and reserves, contact the Parks Victoria hotline on ☎ 131963.

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