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Cycling in the Australian Alps National Parks

Australian Alps Liaison Committee

Minimal impact mountain bike riding

Increasing numbers of visitors using national parks, wilderness areas and other reserves are causing serious damage to the natural environment. Escapes from campers' fires, expansion of campsites, trampling and cutting off vegetation, outbreaks of gastroenteritis and the rapid deterioration of walking tracks have all become more commonplace.

Fortunately many visitors have adopted a new ethic, **minimal impact recreation**. Without it we run the very real danger of "loving our natural areas to death". By learning to **tread softly**, we can minimise the damage to the natural environment and reduce the need for track and campsite closures and restrictions on visitor numbers.

This page explains minimal impact techniques for mountain bike riders. Some requirements (such as those to do with fire) carry the weight of the law. All must be used if we want to continue to enjoy the Australian Alps.



Cycle right

Mountain bike riding has increased at a very rapid rate in recent years. The pleasure and exhilaration of cycling in natural areas has resulted in people of all ages taking to their bikes for day and overnight trips.

If cyclists are to continue to experience the pleasure of riding in relatively undisturbed areas, they will need to follow this code and limit the impact of their visit.

Ride on roads and management vehicle tracks only. Even roads and tracks are particularly susceptible to damage when wet. They cannot be used when they are seasonally closed. Bicycles may not be used (even on management tracks) in wilderness areas. Walking tracks are managed for walkers and are not available for use by bicycles.

Respect the rights of others. Other visitors have the same rights as you, so let them go about their activities without interference. Keep speeds down to avoid frightening other visitors.

If you meet walkers, announce your presence, slow down and give them right of way as you pass.

If you pass horse riders, always give horses right way. Some horses are easily frightened by bicycles and a spooked horse can be dangerous to you and its rider. Announce your presence by voice, dismount and talk as the horse and rider pass to reassure the animal. If necessary, move off the track to give the horse plenty of room. Be alert for signs of horses (hoof prints or droppings) and watch for them on bends or crests.

Avoid skidding. Skidding damages tracks by removing the harder surface layer. This can then lead to erosion. Cutting corners also causes erosion. Don't cut corners, stay on the track.

Stay away from wet, muddy areas. Muddy areas are very prone to damage. The tracks you leave behind channel the water when it rains and this leads to erosion.

Check before you leave. It is a good idea to check with local land managers to find out about any areas specific track closures, fire regulations, limits on camping or other general information.

Planning your trip

Let someone know before you go mountain bike riding. Tell them about your party, your route, when you plan to return and the equipment the party is carrying., Remember to contact them when you get back.

Keep your party small (four to eight people). Large parties have more environmental impact, affect the experience of others and are harder to manage.

Go off peak. Where possible avoid the peak times of the year (December to February) and the more popular areas. You will miss the crowds and spread the impact, giving the environment a chance to recover.

Plan your route so that you can camp at recognised campsites. If possible, do not create a new site.

Wear your helmet whenever you are cycling. It is required by law even on fire tracks.

Minimise your impact by taking the following items:

- i Fuel stove and fuel for cooking
- i Good quality tent
- i Hand trowel for burying toilet wastes.

See also:

- i [Care for the Alps—leave no trace](#), 2003
- i [River Users Code](#)
- i [Car-based Camping Code](#)
- i [Snow Camping Code](#)
- i [Bushwalking Code](#)
- i [Huts code](#), 2005
- i [Horseriding Code](#)