

Survive the Adventure

Bushwalking is much more enjoyable (and much safer) if you are attuned to your surroundings (topology, weather, life-forms) and not watching a screen.

Smartphones and GPS receivers are wonderful navigation aids, but electronics can fail. GPS does not work well (or at all) in deep canyons. Mobile phone reception is unreliable in remote locations, and you will probably use flight mode to save batteries on a long walk. Always have at least two backups for navigation:

1. Carry a paper map and compass. There are various [options](#) to print these, including your local Officeworks who may be willing to colour-laser print onto your water-resistant paper. The map and compass may become your lifelines, and you need to know whether they will survive wet or a hard fall. Take care of them. To save batteries on a long walk, you will probably navigate most by map and compass, and confirm position by GPS only occasionally.
2. Before each walk, form a good mental picture of “escape routes” if things go wrong. Update this during the walk. At every key direction change: stop, turn around, look back where you have come, remember what you see in case you need to go back. This only takes a moment, but it may save your life.

Learn to navigate by the sun, and the stars (in case they are visible).

Never leave your essential gear (warmth, shelter, water, food, first aid, knife) while you navigate a short side-trip in rough country. You probably do not know how to survive without them, and if things go wrong you may not find them in time.

If you get lost, stop, think. Retracing your path to a known location is often the best option. If you push on, it may be deeper into trouble. Make doubly sure that you can get back.

If you get into other trouble, stop, think. Safety comes first. Can you get safely to a prominent location? Get help by whatever means are available, before you turn the situation into a more difficult rescue, or a recovery. Judgment will improve with experience, but things can still go wrong.

Tell someone reliable where you plan to go. Leave them a copy of the map with your planned route. Before you change plans mid-walk, consider how they will find you if things go wrong. Every group (even a group of one) should carry a registered PLB, make sure that it works, and know how to use it if the need arises.