

Kosciuszko National Park

Staying safe all year

Photo: Murray Vandermeer



nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

Alpine areas present special safety issues. Snow can fall at any time of year covering the tracks and bringing cold conditions. Always be prepared. Every year search and rescue operations are carried out often on visitors who underestimate the conditions and overestimate their mountain safety skills.

- Travel with at least two others and tell a reliable friend of your travel plans – and tell them when you return.
- Check the weather before leaving and change your plans if bad weather is approaching—at any time of year. If you are advised not to go – don't.
- Bad weather includes an approaching low pressure system, approaching cold front, strong wind warning or severe weather warning.
- Take layers of warm, waterproof clothing— even in summer and even on day trips.
- Take plenty of food as it helps provide heat for the body.
- Take plenty of water or boil all stream water before drinking.
- Wear sunblock and sunglasses all year. UV is high and new snow reflects much of the sun—children are especially prone.
- Know where you are going. If leaving the marked tracks in summer or heading backcountry in winter, take a topographic map and compass and be sure you know how to use them.
- Take a bivouac bag or space blanket for emergencies. You may also want to hire a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB).

DON'T RELY ON TECHNOLOGY

- Mobile phones are no guarantee of safety. The coverage within the park is patchy and the cold can severely affect batteries.
- Global Positioning System (GPS) devices use a satellite network to provide you with your location. However batteries are affected by cold and they should be used with a topographic map and compass.
- Even experienced travellers should take a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) which can be hired from NPWS visitor centres. They transmit a signal via satellite to the emergency centre in Canberra.
- Only activate a PLB if you are in danger or injured and then stay where you are.
- Technology won't guarantee your safety though as mountain weather means helicopters can only fly about 50 percent of the time. Always be prepared even for day trips.

IF LOST OR INJURED

- If you need to and have mobile coverage, call 000 for assistance. Call as early as possible – delaying your call, particularly after nightfall, can seriously hamper rescue efforts.
- Stay where you are. You will be harder to find on the move and will use a lot of energy.
- Find a sheltered spot out of the wind and leave something visible for searchers such as an item of colourful clothing.
- If you're above the treeline, don't drop down into the trees except for temporary shelter. It is almost impossible to be seen by helicopters if you do. The only sensible way back out of the alpine area is along the trails to Charlotte Pass, Guthega or Thredbo.

HYPOTHERMIA

- In cold and wet conditions inadequate clothing, tiredness and insufficient food can combine to cause a lowering of normal body temperature which can result in collapse or death if untreated.
- Children get colder and tire faster than adults. They are especially susceptible to hypothermia. Check them regularly, especially inactive babies in backpacks.
- Signs of hypothermia are often mistaken for fatigue. The victim is exhausted, lags behind, stumbles, may have slurred speech and appear drunk, is reluctant to keep walking or skiing, is cold to touch and has a slow pulse.
- Treat the victim immediately by providing shelter and warm, dry clothes, a sleeping bag or shared body warmth. Warm the person from the inside out so give them a warm drink if they are conscious.

TO FIND OUT MORE

For advice and further information, including detailed maps and PLB hire, contact Snowy Region Visitor Centre 02 6450 5600 or visit:

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/parksafety

