

Nature Outings Guide



Many of us don't get out into nature as much as we should. We're too busy, plugged in to screens and rushing through our busy lives. But nature is essential to our health and wellbeing — and to the health of our planet. It also helps us to build community, and shapes our movement around the places we love.

At ACF, we work, live, and play on the lands of many First Nations peoples across this beautiful country. Traditional Owners have cared for land, water, and community since time immemorial and it's important that we learn from and respect this deep connection to place. ACF Nature Outings are a great opportunity to learn about whose country you'll be on and the long history of the landscape. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

The goals of ACF Nature Outings

So why is this important to do? How does it help us build people power, change the story and fix the system? A good nature outing will:

- Connect people back to nature and the places and wildlife we're trying to protect.
- Strengthen the ACF community by strengthening the relationships that we'll need to rely on in order to take powerful actions in the future.
- Provide a social outing that helps connect new people to ACF who may not have been involved in advocacy or your group before.
- Make connections between ACF's national campaigns, and the local places that we love.
- Help you feel good - time in nature is the perfect medicine for restoring mental, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing.

Where should you host your Nature Outing?

Nature is near and far — what matters is that you go outside into it. Host your Outing in the forest or the mountains, at the beach or in the bush, at a local park or reserve or the creek down the road. You could also host an Outing at a place you love that's under threat — like the Great Barrier Reef, the Australian Alps, a forest threatened by logging, or some local bush at risk from mining, cattle grazing or a housing development. Or you could host it in a place that the ACF has fought to protect, like a wetland on the Murray River, Stradbroke Island, or an iconic national park.

It is also important to understand how land was cared for before colonisation, and how it's been damaged since. You can contact your local Indigenous nation or Land Council to see if they host walks and can tell you the ancient stories of the landscape.

Roles

There are a couple of roles that will need to be clear on the outing itself, but the work in the lead up can be divided amongst your group as you see fit.

Outings Leader

This person is responsible on the day for briefing participants, physically leading the group and making decisions that keep participants safe. The Outings Leader should try to help participants get to know each other and build connections. While they are in charge for that day, it is important that they fulfil their responsibility in the most kind, approachable and generous way.

Outings Co-Leader

This person is responsible on the day for supporting the Outings Leader, physically tailing the group, making sure that the pace is appropriate and that all members feel included.

First Aider (where necessary)

Some outings may be more remote and require someone to have basic first aid skills. While there is no legal requirement for community groups to have this, it is advised where possible.

Photographer (where necessary)

Is there someone in your group who can take photos and put them on the ACF Community Slack Channel?

Carpool Organiser (where necessary)

If the location is some distance away from where people live, it's advised to carpool or catch public transport. If a carpool is necessary, it's as simple as finding willing drivers, allocating people to cars, and making sure that they have each other's phone numbers.

Organisation Checklist

A Few Weeks Before

- ☐ **Find people to lead this with you.** You'll need at least two outings leaders on the day, but there's also work to be done in the lead up. Ask for help! There are roles listed above that might be helpful.
- ☐ **Choose a place you love** — the bush, the beach, the mountains or forest or even a local park. Consider distance to the trailhead, appropriateness for your group size, accessibility for your group needs, weather and time of year (i.e. amount of daylight).
- ☐ **Check the Guidelines** on page 7 to see whether this shapes your outing in any way.
- ☐ **Register your gathering** [here](#). Then:
 - a) If you're an ACF Community Group: set up your event webpage in Action Centre, and include the details outlined below, or
 - b) If you're not (yet!) in an ACF Community Group, an ACF People Power team member will get in touch to confirm these details and help you promote your gathering:
 - Meeting place. Will you meet in a specific car park at the trailhead? Is the spot marked on Google Maps? If not, give directions such as nearby streets, intersections or landmarks.
 - Difficulty. Terrain, length in Kms and in time, steepness, pace, etc. Note unusual situations.
 - Meeting time.
 - Contact information.
 - What they will be learning about- is it an outing learning about a habitat that is at risk? Or a place ACF helped to protect? Or a place that has significance to the Traditional Owners of that land?
 - What people should bring: wet-weather protection, hat, sunscreen, water, lunch or money for lunch, charged phone, etc.
 - Arrangements for if people want to self-organise carpools.
 - Any restrictions or caveats. Activities requiring reservations should include any space limitations, deadlines, requirements for experience, contact info, fees, or other requirements
 - Whether the outing will go ahead or not in wet weather.
- ☐ **Promote your gathering:**
 - Online on social media
 - You can design flyers using our templates [here](#). You can leave them in local coffee shops or other places that allow flyers.
 - Send an email out to your friends, your ACF community group, or other ACF supporters in your area who we'll get you in touch with.

☐ **Do a bit more research** about the place that you're visiting, its history pre-colonization and since. Which Aboriginal nation is the place located in? Which animal and plant species live there? How might they have been threatened? Take a couple of notes to share with your group on the day. You may also need to read about the rules for the specific place that you're going to. Do they have toilets? Where would be a good spot for snacks and lunch breaks? What are the trail conditions? What's the availability of water? A scouting expedition is often the best way to get some of this information.

One Week Before

☐ **Collect equipment** you might need like an emergency blanket, first aid kit, a trash bag and some extra dehydrated emergency food and water for the group. You can also hire an optional Personal Locator Beacon that may be helpful if you are going to remote locations that don't have phone reception.

☐ **Set an email reminder** to be sent automatically to guests. You can also manage all the details of your gathering in 'event settings'. If you need to change the details of your event, simply login, edit and send a notification to guests.

☐ **Confirm roles** of who from your group will be playing supporting roles on the day.

☐ **Organise Carpool** where necessary.

☐ **Print maps** of your outing. Don't rely on having phone reception!

Day Before

☐ **Check weather forecast** and decide whether the Outing is still going ahead.

☐ **Send a confirmation text** that the outing is going ahead, with a reminder of the details.

Day of the Outing

- ☐ **Arrive early**, ideally with something that identifies you as being with ACF (a t-shirt, badge, etc).
- ☐ **Greet and sign-in group members.** It can be intimidating for people when they are still getting to know a group. It is the co-leader's main priority to welcome people, and connect them to others as they arrive. Use [this sign in form](#) so that you have a clear register of who is meant to be on the Outing, and their emergency contact for that day. Every person who attends must sign in, and if they leave early they must sign out. This is for insurance purposes as well.
- ☐ **Pre-briefing:** Once you have reached your start time, and before you set out, make sure that you brief participants using the template on page 6. This is also a last opportunity for people to opt out if they are unsure.
- ☐ **Get out in nature!** Set out on your outing. Make sure that the group stays together and has breaks at the same time. On occasion, note a species or a habitat that has some significance.
- ☐ **Create a fun and safe culture for volunteers** and one that strengthens the ACF Community. Make connections with and between participants. Make sure that they are staying hydrated and energised (see the safety checklist below). Find out how they are connected to ACF.
- ☐ **Take a break** and use the opportunity to talk about ACF, what we work on and how it is connected to the place that you're in. See ACF's website for information on our campaigns.
- ☐ **Take pictures!** Not just of nature, but of people in nature. Make sure that you get a group shot. Put them up on the ACF Community Slack channel. Don't forget to ask people if they're happy for you to take their photos and post on social media.
- ☐ **Closing debrief.** Participants may be tired, so try to keep the debrief outlined on page 6 short. Make sure that you invite people to the next thing.
- ☐ **Wait with people** or help them get home if they need help.

After the Outing

- ☐ **Add the attendees to your group list** by [uploading the sign in-sheet](#) or marking the attendance on Action Centre.
- ☐ **Send a follow up email** to participants thanking people for coming, and giving them some extra information about ACF's campaigns, how to get involved in your group and what activity you've got happening next (with a way for them to RSVP).

Outing Welcome & Briefing

| | |
|-------|---|
| 2mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome everyone, introduce yourself and ACF. Explain that ACF is Australia's national environment organisation. We are half a million people who speak out for a world where forests, rivers, people and wildlife thrive. Explain your role with ACF and make it clear that you are a volunteer and the Outings Leader for the day. • Explain that you'll be doing a short briefing, and that people should sign in if they haven't already while you are doing so. |
| 2mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land. There are lots of places you can find out more about which Country you're on or how to do an Acknowledgement of Country. Give a bit of context to the landscape you'll be in, its significance to Aboriginal people and the need to respect the land. |
| 3mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get everyone to introduce themselves. Those that have formal roles on the day should mention so. |
| 2mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind people of the distance, difficulty and expected duration of the Outing. Give people another opportunity not to participate if they don't want to. • Advise people of rough break times or locations, safety considerations and environmental guidelines. |
| 1min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that the goal of an ACF Outing is to connect people to nature, one another and to better understand the places we're trying to protect, and how ACF seeks to do so. |

Outing Debrief & Close

| | |
|-------|--|
| 1min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank everyone for coming. Note that you will be following up with everyone via email. Ask if everyone has a way of getting home. |
| 1min | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give them a pitch about joining your group (or starting one with you). There'll be more info on how to do this in ACF's Community Group webinar, which you can invite them to here. Or, invite them to the next thing that is happening! |
| 3mins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do a closing circle, where everyone shares (for example, asking people to share in one sentence something that they learnt about nature, the history of the land or someone in the group). |

Environmental Guidelines

- **Pets.** Pets are generally not permitted in national and state parks due to their impact on native wildlife. Service animals are not considered pets and are not subject to this rule.
- **Respect for the Natural Environment.** The guiding standard is: "Take only pictures; leave only footprints." Make sure your group members do not pick wild flowers or damage plants. Do not cut across trail switchbacks; short-cutting promotes erosion and damages the trail. Soap and detergent must be kept away from waterways.
- **Leave No Litter!** Carry out all your garbage (including organic material). Dispose of trash only at garbage cans and take your recyclables to official collection points.

Safety guidelines

Please read through the following general safety check to make sure you and other volunteers are safe at all times.

- Identify hazards and assess risks and control to minimise potential for injury or harm.
- Hazards can be related to slip and trip hazards, security, fire, weather etc.
- Make sure there are either adequate toileting facilities, or that participants know to bring a trowel and toilet paper.
- Bring adequate drinking water or water purifying tablets.
- Use available shade.
- Bring hats and sunscreen.
- Check the weather and dress accordingly. Current Australian Bureau of Meteorology information is checked for adverse weather conditions (www.bom.gov.au).
- In the unlikely event that a member of the public or another volunteer makes you feel uncomfortable in any way, please remove yourself from the situation in the safest way possible and call an ACF staff member immediately.

Which kinds of events require public liability insurance and which don't?

ACF offers public liability insurance coverage for registered ACF Community Groups for certain activities and events. It will insure the group for any injuries and damage at events should they occur and if they have followed the guidance in this document. The insurance covers activities like stalls, public meetings and bushwalks, but excludes operating aircraft, watercraft or hovercraft and any sporting activities.

Individuals and groups that are not a registered ACF community group will not be covered under ACF's insurance.