Women’s Adventure ACT – FAQ’s

1. ***How do I join an activity?***

We use [**meetup.com**](https://www.meetup.com/Womens-Adventure-ACT/) to manage attendance at all our activities, because not everyone uses Facebook.

We use the Facebook Group for general information, articles relevant to women in the outdoors and adventure, and in some cases - give advance notice of activities before we post them on Meetup.

To join an activity, you’ll need to join up the site at Meetup.com (it’s free), with an email address and password:

Search for our meetup group: Womens Adventure ACT, here:

https://www.meetup.com/Womens-Adventure-ACT/

Click on the red ‘Join This Group’ button

We recommend you download the App (IOS or Android), and use it to keep your attendance status updated.

1. ***I don’t have a Paypal Account/I don’t use Paypal - can I pay cash or transfer by bank transfer please?***

Last year, we had over 560 women participate in over 65 different activities. As our group is run entirely by volunteers, you can imagine the administrative mess if we let everyone pay by three different ways.

Also, carrying $30 in coin on a walk if you’re the walk leader, isn’t much fun. It’s easier if you can set-up a Paypal account, pretty please 😊.

We understand not everyone has/wants to use Paypal. Unfortunately it’s just easier for us to manage payments that way. We’re sorry ☹.

1. ***Why is there a charge for walks?***

Meetup costs us around $300 a year. We also pay a Garmin InReach subscription and run a website. We find that having a small fee encourages people to attend rather than just hit ‘Going’ and then not show up to the activity (which has been a significant issue in the past).

If you’re on a pension or low income (e.g. student), and you really can’t afford the $3.50 activity fee, just let the organiser of the activity know, and we’ll waive the charge for you.

Most clubs or associations in Canberra charge a membership fee to join and/or participate, and some commercial organisations will charge you up to $100 per person, to participate on a walk.

1. ***What type of activities do you run?***

Walking is our keystone activity, however as our focus is about participation, we tend to do more moderate rather than extreme walks (or extreme anything). If you want to do longer, harder, mostly off-track walks, we recommend you join a local bushwalking club, instead.

We run a range of other ‘adventure’ activities such as abseiling, kayaking, caving, canyoning, too – mostly through commercial providers where we try and get a group discount.

We also run educational and skills activities such as beginner navigation courses, survival and outdoor skills such as knot tying and camp cooking.

1. ***Can I bring my child or pet on the walk?***

All our activities are for adults 18+ years.

Occasionally we will run an activity such as a shorter walk that may also be suitable for children and the description of the walk will specify that children of a certain age are welcome to attend. There is no need to reserve an additional spot for a child on those specified walks.

As a parent, you are responsible for your child at all times during the walk.

Unfortunately we don’t allow dogs (or other pets) on any of our activities due to several reasons: some people are fearful of animals / some people are allergic to animals / dogs aren’t allowed in National Parks, but there are other meet-up groups that are specifically for dog walkers and we’d encourage you to walk with your dog in that group, if you’d prefer to walk with your dog. Please leave Fido at home 😊

1. ***What if I can’t now make it to an activity I’ve RSVP’d to?***

If you can’t now make it , please cancel your attendance on the meet-up site or app, with enough notice (more than 24 hours please!). This gives other people a chance to arrange childcare / transport / pack gear, etc to take your place. We understand that on rare occasions, things pop up, but it’s not okay to cancel at the last minute or simply just not show up at all. Please respect your fellow group members and help keep our good name with any providers.

**Failing to attend:** Please be an adult and keep your own reminders about activities you’ve said you’ll attend. Failure to attend once you’ve RSVPd will have removed from the group as it’s frustrating for others who wanted to attend but can’t, when people who have said they are going, but just don’t show.

We have a separate policy about refunds. Please ensure you read that.

1. ***I have an idea for an activity – can I suggest it?***

As we are run completely by volunteer labour, if you have an idea for an activity – providing you’re prepared to organise, host and lead the activity (and it’s safe to do so), we’d be happy to list it up as a group activity (THANK YOU!!). We can never have enough activities or volunteers to run them. Please contact us and we’ll walk you through the simple process to run an activity.

Unfortunately someone else isn’t going to organise and run your idea for you though – we all have families and jobs and other hobbies, too 😊.

1. ***I’m just looking for trail running / walk buddies***

We’re happy for you to use the Facebook Group to let others know if you’re going for a short walk up Mt Ainslie, for example, and are looking for a trail buddy. We would caution you to keep an eye on responses to make sure that 50 others aren’t going to also turn up!

If you’re wanting to advertise something that’s riskier (e.g leading climbs or off-track exploratory walks), please have a chat to us first. We’ll work out the safest way to advertise for buddies, without it being a group-run activity.

We’re happy for the group to be used to make contacts in that way.

1. ***I’m (insert age) and am not sure if I’m too old / too young for the group.***

We have a wide variety of ages and experiences in our group – 39% of our members are 30 and under; 31% are aged between 40 and 50 years and 30% are aged over 50.

We think it’s healthy to make friends with women of all ages. We walk to people’s capability, on the day. Someone younger may be slower, someone older could be super fit and want to push the group to go faster - either way, we always walk to the slowest member’s capability. That’s a safety issue plus no one wants to feel like they are that person at the back holding everyone up.

We’re not ageist and we’re asking you to be open minded about age, too 😊. Ultimately our members have a good time on our activities, regardless of everyone’s age.

1. ***Can I bring my husband/boyfriend along?***

Research shows that women feel more supported and learn better, in all-women environments. Women also speak up more and share leadership. Women get better opportunities to lead, when there are only other women in the group, instead of deferring leadership to men.

We know that some women have experienced harassment and/or dating pressure in mixed gender meet-up groups. Whilst we love our fathers/brothers/sons and other male relatives, we want to keep this a women-only group, so that you can learn and participate in a more supportive environment.

Your male relatives and friends are welcome to set up their own outdoor group if they wish.

Finally, anyone seeking to use the group as a same-sex dating group will also be asked to leave. We’re a harassment-free zone and we’d like to keep it that way 😊.

1. ***Can I bring my friend, also?***

If they are a group member and have also RSVP’d to the activity, then yes. Some activities will allow you to RSVP for an additional attendee, some won’t.

1. ***Is this a lesbian/gay outdoors club?***

(We actually had one bloke say this about us). Specifically, no, but we may run a few LGBTIQ activities to support Canberra’s Gay Festival – Springout. We welcome diversity in our group – it’s one of our principles – so all LGBTIQ members including non-binary or gender queer participants are especially welcome, and we have a discrimination-free zone.

1. ***Do I need special hiking boots?***

We generally don’t recommend hiking boots unless you are doing a difficult multi-day pack hike. Even then, it depends on your strength, fitness, balance, etc. Some people hike in barefeet (not recommended!), some in minimalist shoes and sandals, some in trail runners, some in standard hiking shoes, and some in boots. It’s a myth that hiking boots will give you better ankle stability.

You will need special boots for any snow activities, however. We’ll let you know.

We don’t recommend standard joggers for any pack hiking or longer/more rugged walks though, as they have very little grip. Trail runners with good grip and lugs are okay for most walks (e.g Salomon, Innov8, La Sportiva).

1. ***How fit do I need to be to participate?***

The activity lead/organiser will specify in the activity description, what level of fitness required, along with any difficulties associated with the track or activity (e.g steep sections, scree, rock scrambling, etc). We’ll also use the Australian Walking Track Grading System [(AWTGS](https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/safety/bushwalking-safety/australian-walking-track-grading-system)) to help provide information about what to expect from more remote walks.

Generally, the majority of our activities are about participation rather than fitness, and we walk at a moderate pace, to the slowest member of the group. Where a walk might be a bit faster or specifically designated as a fitness walk, longer in duration and/or distance, more difficult (including more technical such as off-track or steep in grade), we’ll let you know. We also include walk distance information on every walk.

We require you to self-select according to your own level of fitness however the activity lead/organiser has the authority to remove anyone from commencement of the activity, if they consider that person may not be able to safely complete the activity or may impact on the safety of the group (whatever the reason).

The fitter you are, the more you’ll enjoy the activities of course, but we’re not specifically a fitness group.

If you have a medical condition (including a psychological condition) that could impact on your ability to safely participate (for example: epilepsy, asthma, diabetes), it is your responsibility to inform the activity lead and ensure you bring any personal medications with you, on the walk.

If you’re a fast walker, we ask that you respect the principles of the group along with respecting any slower walkers please, and remain with the group. We will not take responsibility for anyone who leaves the group while an activity is in progress, including people who walk off at the front because of speed.

1. ***Can I geocache whilst I’m on a walk?***

See the comment above. Anyone not remaining with the group and choosing to walk off for whatever reason, will not be considered as part of the group activity or responsibility, and will likely not be permitted on any future walks. It’s a significant risk to the group leader, to others in the group, and possibly yourself, to just walk off during the conduct of an activity.

So Geocaching on our activities is not permitted.

1. ***I’ve never done much bushwalking / kayaking / abseiling. I’m not very experienced.***

Fantastic! You joined the right group. We have a real mix of experiences in the group – only 5% of our group members are super experienced, a large portion have some outdoor experience, and some of our members are trying our activities for the very first time. Most of our activities are suitable for complete beginners or those with not much experience. If we run a more advanced activity, we’ll specify the knowledge/experience requirements in the activity description.

One of our principles is to help women foster and develop outdoor skills and knowledge (including develop leadership skills, too!) in a safe, supportive and judgement-free way. Think of us like the Girl Guides, only a bit cooler 😉 and without the daggy uniform. Questions are welcome anytime, and no one will judge you for what you do or don’t know. We guarantee you’ll learn something on every activity that we do 😊.

1. ***Do I need any special equipment?***

The activity lead/organiser will specify in the activity, any required items. For all activities, you should always bring:

* Sufficient water for the duration (and following) the event
* Hat / sunglasses / suncream
* Decent rain jacket (we recommend *at least* a 2.5 layer goretex jacket)
* Warm weather gear (e.g warm layer jacket / beanie / merino gloves
* Personal medication / personal first aid kit
* Appropriate footwear
* Emergency (pealess) [whistle](https://www.paddypallin.com.au/fox-40-sharx-120-db-whistle.html)
* [Emergency space blanket](https://m.paddypallin.com.au/sol-emergency-blanket-survival-orange-ns.html)
* [Snake bandages](https://www.chemistwarehouse.com.au/buy/90006/snake-bite-bandage-10cm-x-10-5m?gclid=Cj0KCQjww_f2BRC-ARIsAP3zarHcARFyf5Ja1eI2xklvs583grlYBiI8I76S_os8evuv5_IkJsPk0PAaAthHEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds) x 2 (Aeroform, Smart or Setopress brands are best – 10cm x 10.5cm)
* In summer, please bring electrolytes

The Group also has a Gear Loan Store, courtesy of an ACT Government Grant. If you don’t have the right hiking or camping equipment for an overnight hike, we have 10 sets of the following we can loan you (high quality and lightweight gear) at a low cost:

* Backpack / tent / sleeping mat / sleeping bag / headlamp / crockery and cutlery / camp stove

We charge a small fee to help us cover the cost of (eventually) replacing or repairing the item.

We regularly run gear info sessions also, so if you’re wanting to buy gear but aren’t sure about what or how to actually buy the right piece of kit, come along to our gear info sessions where we’ll explain technical information like: what’s an R value on a sleeping mat, the differences between down and synthetic sleeping bags, how to pick the best tent, what items shouldn’t you buy second hand, etc.

1. ***What should I have in a first-aid kit?***

For our more remote walks - where there is no mobile phone reception or an ambulance is >1 hour away, check if your Walk Leader will have a first-aid kit on the walk. You should always bring some of your own items, regardless. As a minimum – as a group walk member, we suggest you carry the following:

* In Case of Emergency Card (with any allergies and your emergency contact information)
* 2 x snake bite bandages (Aeroform / Smart or Setopress brands are preferred)
* Assorted blister materials (e.g. Hiker’s wool / duct tape / Moleskin patches / Fixomul tape / Rocktape blister tape / Scholl blister gel pads )
* Hand sanitiser
* 2 x gastro-stop / 2 x Ibuprofen / 2 x non-drowsy antihistamine / electrolytes
* Sunscreen
* A pee rag and/or toilet paper (see Q. 21)
* Personal Medications + instructions on dosage / how to administer
* Electrolytes

If you’re walking without the group, here’s a [link](https://womensadventure.net/f/hiking-first-aid-kits) to a more comprehensive, but still lightweight, First-Aid kit.

1. ***I don’t have transport – can I get a lift?***

Generally we’ll try and minimise the number of vehicles that require parking at an activity, and car pool where possible. If you need a lift, place a call-out in the Discussion section of the activity on meet-up. If someone is willing and able to give you a lift (and most times they can), they’ll respond and you can arrange things privately.

For ‘away’ trips that require longer travel (e.g >1 hour driving), it’s courteous to offer petrol money to the driver. We’ll calculate an estimated per person figure and put that in the activity write up, to keep the amount fair between everyone.

We haven’t yet had anyone who couldn’t attend because they couldn’t get a lift.

1. ***I don’t know anyone else attending and am a bit shy / socially anxious / worried about meeting new people***

We understand completely. All of us who have participated in the group, at one point, it was our first activity and we didn’t know anyone either. Several times a year we’ll run a small coffee meet n greet activity and/or a new member walk, where you can come along for a chat, we’ll talk about the group / how we operate / how things work / what kinds of activities we have on, you can ask questions, meet the organisers and other new members or existing members.

If you’re feeling especially concerned, just message the Activity Lead and let them know this is your first time, and we’ll look out for you and make sure you are introduced and feel welcomed 😊.

1. ***Do you have insurance coverage for participants?***

No, because we’re a meet-up group which isn’t a legal entity and therefore can’t take out insurance in it’s own name. Be aware than any adventure/outdoor business has insurance for their protection – and not yours (if you’ve ever tried to claim against someone else’s car insurance in a motor vehicle accident, you’ll understand this principle). Having insurance is not an appropriate risk-management technique.

Instead, we practice good risk-management applicable to outdoor organisations and bushwalking clubs. We have a Risk Management plan for our activities.

Where walks have greater risk, we may develop a risk plan, carry a first-aid kit, have navigation skills, group leadership experience, and take a Personal Locator Beacon. Where we don’t have these skills or equipment on a more remote walk, we’ll let you know, so you can decide whether or not to attend on that basis.

For our less risky walks (e.g. Urban walks where mobile reception is available and/or ambulance is likely a maximum hour away), these skills and equipment may not be available – we’ll let you know so that you can decide whether to attend the walk or not, on that basis.

We don’t let just anyone lead a risky activity, but we manage our group risks responsibly. If you’re concerned about how we’re managing something, please contact the Group Organiser. Our aim is to keep everyone safe and have everyone return home safely, at the end of the activity.

We do recommend you have your own ambulance cover via Health Insurance however, because we cannot cover this (or any other evacuation or rescue cost)

1. ***Why can’t you increase the number of participants on a walk? I can’t get a spot!***

See the paragraph above – we practice sound risk management. That means, the bigger the group size, the higher the risk of an incident occurring and the more difficult it becomes in managing both the group and the incident should something occur (e.g. group member gets lost).

We’re concerned about the environment, particularly for sensitive flora areas in our national parks, and think it’s irresponsible to have a big group of people tramping all over a national park path, at any one time. It’s frustrating for other users of the path also (having to pass a big group on a trail for example), not to mention having multiple vehicles try and park in any one spot.

We appreciate that opening up more spots on an activity would be better for allowing more participation, we feel it’s not responsible of us to do so.

What we’d love to see instead, is more people volunteering to run an activity 😊.

Whilst other groups or commercial operators may have larger groups – by making this statement we’re not implying that they are irresponsible (hashtag #notalloutdoorgroups), simply that we may have a different risk profile to them, and choose to run with smaller groups.

Besides, we think it’s more personable getting to know a smaller group of people, too.

1. ***Are there snakes?***

Between September and March – when temperatures rise over 20 degrees, snakes are much more active. Yes, we have seen snakes occasionally. But you’re far more likely to see one in a Canberra suburb, than out bushwalking. We generally don’t’ walk much over the months of December (everyone is busy organising Chrissy stuff) or January either – because people are away on family holidays and the risk of heatstroke increases significantly.

If we’re walking in more remote areas where we know there may be snakes (e.g Mt Ginini), we’ll recommend you wear Gaitors.

Always carry 2 x snakebite bandages and know how to use them.

Some useful stats about snakebite: Only 2-3 people per year in Australia, die from snakebite. Approximately 3000 people are bitten every year, and 76% of those are men trying to catch and kill snakes around the house. Only 10% of people bitten require some type of antivenin. You’re 11 times more likely to die from lightning strike, than you are from snake bite.

So yes, whilst we may encounter them on our trips, it’s important to be prepared.

1. ***Can you run the walks at a different time/day please? I can’t attend when they are currently on.***

Everything we do in the group is run by volunteers. All the group admin, social media, researching and trying out new walks, liaising with any activity providers, organising activities, promoting activities, responding to any questions that participants have, and then actually running the activities – is by volunteer effort

Because activity leaders are therefore kindly giving up their personal time to do all this and run the activity for you, we leave the date/time of the activity completely at their convenience. If you’d rather participate on a different date/time, we cheekily suggest you contact the Group Organiser to offer to run one at an alternative day/time that suits you, instead 😊.

1. ***Can you send a reminder notice when an activity is open for RSVP’s?***

Please see the above description about our volunteer effort, and have some consideration about what you expect us to do 😊.

Please be an adult and get yourself organised. Some people set alarms on their phones to remind themselves when things open for RSVPs.

1. ***Why isn’t there a waitlist?***

We once spent an entire weekend contacting 35 people on a waitlist, only to be discover they had all made other arrangements. As we are all volunteers, we have better things to do with our time than contact people on waitlists 😊. If there is a spot available on an activity, you can take it.

We encourage you to subscribe to updates or changes for activities, and check back in regularly in case a spot becomes available. Often a spot will become vacant the night before an activity or on the morning of, so check back regularly.

1. ***Can I advertise my hairdressing business in the group?***

C’mon. We don’t want to be spammed with irrelevant advertising. So no.

Occasionally we will ask for a bit of shameless self-promotion of your @insta account if you have a relevant outdoors / adventure account.

But please keep things on topic.

There are other pages for [selling outdoor goods](https://www.facebook.com/groups/559158251476547/), also, but we don’t mind if you want to advertise the occasional relevant, outdoors thing in the group.

If you have any questions about walks, gear etc, please use the brains trust and ask away!

1. ***Can you STOP SPAMMING ME WITH MEET-UP EMAILS***

We once had someone shout that at us. Please, bring your manners to the group. We don’t control the communications you receive from meet-up, except those we specifically send just to you, using the private messages function. Yes, it is an awful, ugly app but it’s the best we have for managing our attendance, that doesn’t require a second mortgage.

**You** get to adjust and control how many notifications you get for what, in the app settings (Android and iphone).

Click on your profile photo at the very top right hand section of the app

* Click on the three vertical dots that come up
* Click ‘Manage Notifications’
	+ Under ‘Push Notifications’ – go adjust whatever you don’t want notifications about (be careful to leave “Messages” on please – we would hate for you to miss something because you had that functionality turned off. We do use private messages if we sometimes to contact you personally about something specific).
	+ Under “Email Updates’ – go and turn off everything that you don’t want notifications for.

Simple!

1. ***What if I have to pee on a walk?***

Firstly, we’d encourage everyone to bring and use a [pee rag](https://lotsafreshair.com/2020/03/10/what-the-heck-is-a-pee-rag/). It sounds a bit ick, but it’s actually much better for the environment.

If you have to leave the track for any reason, make sure you let someone know! We’ll stop up ahead and wait for you. Just ducking off the track and not telling anyone is the best way to get lost!

Just squat behind a tree or rock, whatever, and then pee. Using a pee rag means no awful toilet paper is left on the track.

And if it’s number 2’s? We abide by the Leave No Trace Principles which means you’ll need to bury that and any accompanying toilet paper. We always have a trowel and some loo paper on all walks, or a [poop bag](https://thedyrt.com/magazine/gear/wag-bag-camping-waste/). There is nothing worse than encountering a human turd, or turd + toilet paper on a walking track. Dig about 12 – 20 cms deep and cover it up, please.

Finally, you’ll also need to carry out any used period gear such as pads or tampons – please don’t leave, bury or throw tampons or pads in the bush.

1. ***I have a complaint***

We do appreciate ***genuine*** feedback – positive stuff - as much as where we could make improvements. Please contact the Group Organiser if you have concerns or suggestions. And if you have nice stuff to say, you are welcome to leave us some comments on our [Facebook Page](https://www.facebook.com/womensadventureACT/).

But please remember, all of this is run by volunteers. It’s super easy to criticise something but then do nothing to contribute positively to the group. So before you give a not so great view about something, think about whether it’s a big deal or just your individual preference or view about how you think we should run things. If you’d like to help out or you think you could really make a difference in the group, we welcome all volunteer efforts, immensely!!

1. ***I LOVE WHAT YOU DO, can I shout you a coffee?***

Yes, PLEASE, we’d love that! The group costs me personally, a minimum of $700+ a year to run (meet-up and website costs and Garmin subscription), as well as personal expenses that all walk leaders incur in using their own gear (e.g. Personal Locator Beacons), petrol in driving out to do walk reccies, and buying maps and walk books and/or having navigation app subscriptions.

Coffee donations are most welcome via Paypal, here:

paypal.me/womensadventureact

1. ***Any secrets for cheap gear?***

Yes! Mention our group, and Paddy Palin’s in Braddon will give you 10% discount, as will Mont in Fyshwick.

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