

Teachers' and group leaders' package

Great Sandy National Park



Safety is our concern, but your responsibility.

Welcome

National parks, marine parks and recreation areas are protected areas managed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), part of the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing (NPRSR). Schools and organised groups are welcome to enjoy these areas and learn from them.

Traditional Owners have a long and on-going relationship with the area that falls under Queensland's national parks and forests. In order to acknowledge the important connection with Aboriginal people, QPWS urges visitors to treat the country through which they walk or drive with respect and care.

Please understand

Everyone has an impact, but large groups that camp, canoe or walk together can spoil an area in a very short period of time. Groups visiting protected areas should always consider those that come after them and leaders should put good environmental codes in place within their groups' guidelines.

QPWS rangers have compiled the following guide to help you—teachers or group leaders—take care of your groups, yourselves and the environment. The rangers ask that you print off this guide and read it carefully and do all you can to help everyone enjoy their visit—both your group and those that come after you.



Before you start ...

Careful planning of your program, camp or activity can greatly assist QPWS in the assessment of your proposal. Please consider four important questions, remembering the rights of other visitors to the protected areas:

1. Is there any other practical venue for the proposed program, camp or activity?
2. Does the proposed program, camp or activity conflict with the protected area values and their role of nature conservation?
3. Does the proposed program, camp or activity conflict with the objectives of the Great Sandy Region Management Plan 1994-2010?
4. Will there be anything other than footprints left behind when you leave?

If you were able to answer 'No' to all four of the above questions, please read on. If not, perhaps you need to look at other venues, or review your program.

Bookings

Are permits needed?

Yes—well before entering the protected area for:

- Camping.
- Driving your vehicle on Fraser Island and parts of the Cooloola Recreation Area.
- Entering 'restricted access areas'.
- Collecting, sampling or conducting research.
- Conducting a group activity.
- Conducting a commercial activity.

Remember!

Inform your group about permit conditions, to ensure they know you are following regulations. This educates future users of our protected areas.

Pre-booking campsites

Visit the relevant website of the protected area you wish to visit. Each site contains unique information to the park.

Park web pages of the Great Sandy Region are:

Great Sandy National Park:

- Fraser Island
- Cooloola
- Woody Island
- * Both Fraser Island and Cooloola are managed under the *Recreation Areas Management Act 2006*. Woody Island is managed under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

Inskip Peninsula Recreation Area

- * Inskip Peninsula is not part of the Great Sandy National Park, however it is managed under the *Recreation Areas Management Act 2006*.

Great Sandy Marine Park

- * The Great Sandy Marine Park is managed under the *Marine Parks Act 2004*.

Please note: Bookings will **not** be made until all required paperwork is obtained by QPWS.

Applications are to be received no less than 60 days prior to visiting. To find out more about the application process and to apply:

Fraser Island, Woody Island and Great Sandy Marine Park enquiries:

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
PO Box 101, Maryborough QLD 4650.
Ph: (07) 4121 1800

Cooloola and Inskip Peninsula enquiries:

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
PO Box 818, Tewantin QLD 4565.
Ph: (07) 5449 7792

For policy information on group permits and licences, visit us online <www.npsr.qld.gov.au/licences-permits> or phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

Information

- Visitor guide brochures.
- DVD (sand driving, best practice camping hints—ideal for pre-excursion viewing).
- Website information (general web pages, maps, conditions report and park news).

Ranger talks

- Opportunities for ranger talks are limited and applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Talks must be booked at least 2 months prior to your visit.
- Topics are general and teacher discussions with rangers are essential beforehand.
- Talks usually last about 35 mins.
- Teachers or group leaders are responsible for the group and must be present for the duration of the talk.
- Prepare an alternative activity—emergency situations may mean rangers have to cancel the talk at the last moment.

Messages for group leaders

Use these guidelines and hints for group excursions. Please read these guidelines before you plan your excursion schedule. To be fully prepared, you will need to contact the rangers for site advice and visit the site yourself before hand. Courtesy calls informing the ranger of your schedule are essential. Good preparation reduces risks and has many other benefits. Leaders must follow their organisations risk assessment and emergency planning polices, or create sound policies or guidelines before visiting the protected area.

Benefits all round

Careful planning of excursions results in widespread benefits.

For teachers/leaders:

- The satisfaction of knowing your program is well planned and provides an educational experience.
- Credit for a successful excursion.

For young people:

- Opportunities to visit, study and enjoy a natural area.
- Encouragement to become active and informed citizens, who care for natural environments.

For QPWS:

- Having school groups follow minimal impact code guidelines can reduce need for rangers to engage in time-consuming follow-up sessions and clean up work.

For your school/organisation:

- Rangers see involvement in a carefully planned excursion as a worthwhile investment of their time and may provide extra support during your program, and any future excursions by your group.

For the environment:

- Minimal impact activities and informed users help look after protected areas.

For future groups:

- Well managed and cared for protected areas for environmental education.

Supervising your group

Please remember that QPWS is not responsible for managing your group. Young people will respond far better to your directions. Good supervision is essential.

Reconnaissance

Before any excursion, leaders need to visit the area to know exactly what to expect. Consider a reconnaissance an integral part of your excursion preparation.

Resting

Young people need to recuperate after walking. Do not walk the group until they drop! Allow them and yourself some quiet times throughout the day. You will have a better chance of staying mentally alert. Pace yourselves, your walking and your educational program.

Drinks

Take water. If camping, boil or treat any water you draw from creeks, rivers, lakes or tanks. Cordials and soft drinks can dehydrate the body. Check that everyone is drinking enough water to avoid dehydration.

Walking

On formed, reasonably level tracks, a person of average fitness takes about 20 minutes to walk one kilometre. Groups walk slower, especially when you add time for activities. Walk the tracks yourself beforehand to assess difficulty or danger areas and choose rest and activity spots.

Assuming average fitness, a general rule of thumb for walking distance related to school year level is:

- Years P–1 can do 1 km with activities
- Year 2 can do 2 km with activities
- Year 3 can do 3 km with activities
- Year 4 can do 4 km with activities
- Year 5 can do up to 6 km with activities
- Year 6–8 can do up to 8 km with activities
- Year 9+ can do up to 12 km with activities

For year P–3 age groups, do your main walk with activities in the morning, followed by lunch back at picnic area and a light activity or gentle stroll in the afternoon. Age groups from year 4 and over can take lunch with them and spread the walk over the whole day. Generally, activities are best undertaken in the first half of the walk and allowing a gentle stroll back to camp or your vehicle.

Minimal Impact Code

Caring for Great Sandy National Park.

Walk softly

Remember, in protected areas everything is protected.

- Please stay on the walking tracks (even when resting) to prevent soil erosion, compaction and trampling of vegetation.
- Sit on the track when doing activities, not on the banks or edges of the track. To prevent getting damp or dirty pants, use small ground sheets to sit on.
- Except in the case of an emergency, stop only at rest areas permitted in your itinerary so as to minimise your impacts on the environment and other visitors.

- Do not shortcut. Shortcutting is unsafe and causes erosion.
- Treat all animals and plants with respect and care. Wildlife has the right to be in parks and forests; this is their home and you are the visitor.
- Take rubbish and food scraps home with you.
- Leave no trace.

Walk safely

- Keep to your schedule. Courtesy calls to inform rangers of your schedule and group details are essential, even if you have not booked a ranger-led program.
- Walk in small parties. Depending on the age group, track conditions and campsite capacity, an average group size is generally 10 children in one group. Leaders need to check their organisation's requirements for adult:child ratio according to the activities.
- Ensure there are enough adults to supervise your group.
- Observe any 'track closed' signs. You could be placing your group at risk if you use tracks that are closed.
- Carry walking track information and maps.
- Be dingo-safe on Fraser Island. For further information, see 'Be dingo-safe' heading below.
- Wilderness walking is not recommended for school groups or groups of young children.
- Keep your group together and calm. It is best if you take the lead, while another adult walks at the end of the line.
- Walk to the pace of your slowest walker, pausing for rests along the way.
- Always supervise your group when around water. Crossing even slightly flooded creeks or rivers is dangerous and must not be attempted.
- Keep your group well away from sand dunes, cliff edges, and escarpments. Sand dunes are unstable and collapse easily, so no climbing, digging, defacing or sliding on these features. Please stay off. They constitute a component of the world heritage values of Fraser Island.
- Coffee rock is very slippery and fragile; please stay off these rocks.
- Always stay behind barriers.
- Read and heed signs, and follow directions from rangers.

Be dingo-safe on Fraser Island

Dingoes on Fraser Island are a protected species. Some have become dangerous because people have fed and encouraged them.

- Never feed dingoes.
- Bin all food scraps immediately.
- Always stay very close to children (even small teenagers).
- Walk in groups.
- Read about Fraser Island dingoes before you go. Everyone in the group should read Be dingo-safe information before going to Fraser Island. Further information is available at www.npsr.qld.gov.au/parks/fraser/dingo-safe.html

Bush toileting

- Always use toilet facilities where provided.
- For sites without toilet facilities, it is essential to bring a minimum of one portable toilet for every 10 people. Toilet waste disposal facilities are located throughout the protected areas. Please refer to Fraser Island, Cooloola and Inskip Peninsula maps for locations.
- Contents of portable toilets must NOT be emptied into public toilets as chemicals will disrupt the biological breakdown processes of these special waste systems. Check the manufacturer's instructions regarding safe disposal of your portable toilet. Never dump toilet waste in the bush or on the beach.
- When walking or canoeing, take a sealable container to carry waste out. Empty this into toilets on your return. Human waste disposal kits are available from major camping stores.

Campfires

Fires are prohibited in most protected areas. Always check these details on the specific web page for the park you are visiting and heed any signage or notices regarding fire prohibitions. Substantial penalties apply.

If campfires are allowed at a particular site:

- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Supervise children at all times.
- Extinguish fires before leaving the area, using water **not** sand.
- Keep fires small. Sparks can burn other tents, people and forests.
- Bring your own untreated milled timber (e.g. mill off cuts) not bush timber which can introduce pests and pathogens to the national park.
- It is an offence to collect kindling or wood from the protected area.

Best-practice camping for groups

Follow guidelines in the park's visitor guide for minimal impact camping. Naturally your group will be excited as everything seems different while on excursion. Without dampening their enthusiasm, prepare your group beforehand by outlining those rules and discussing the reasons.

- Keep rowdiness and noise levels to a minimum.
- Consider other campers. Observe quiet times before 7 am and after 9 pm.
- Be tidy. Encourage personal responsibility towards rubbish, multiuse containers and reusable packaging.
- Remember, facilities are for everyone:
 - Cluster your tents away from individual campers if possible.
 - Consider booking a group camping area for your excursion.
 - Do not allow group members to monopolise facilities.
 - Use showers (if provided) in one time block.
 - Leave facilities clean and tidy.
- Watch for anyone becoming tired or ill.
- Avoid leaving clothing or shoes outside overnight. On Fraser Island, dingoes will take anything that smells interesting.

- Protected areas are areas of total habitat protection. Collecting any plant, animals or artefact, soil, rock or water sample in any protected area is not permitted. In the Great Sandy Marine Park, the taking of some species is regulated by marine national park zones, buffer zones, conservation park zones, habitat protection zones and general use zones. Please refer to the provisions table on the website <www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/parks> to determine which activities are permitted.
- Avoid playing group sports in picnic areas and crowded campgrounds.
- Singing sessions or camp concerts should not be disruptive to other people.
- Do not dig trenches around tents.
- Tie tent ropes to pegs, not trees. Remember to bring sand pegs.
- Teachers and group leaders; the duty of care rests with you, so:
 - Be responsible for your group (day **and** night).
 - Stay alert and stay around.
- Carving or writing on trees, signs or rocks is prohibited.
- Pocket/sheath knives, slingshots or machetes are weapons and are not to be brought on excursions (having weapons in protected areas is an offence and penalties apply).
- Have a last minute litter pick-up before you leave.
- Bring sand pegs and do not tie ropes to trees.
- Take rubbish home with you.

For your safety

Emergencies

You need to be clear on emergency procedures. Discuss your emergency action plan with your school principal or organisation leader. Preventative measures may not always stop accidents, but they can reduce the effect. You must assess each site for yourself, but some precautions are basic and must be observed:

- Be trained in first aid.
- Follow the 'walk safely' guidelines in this guide and the visitor guide for the park you are visiting.
- Have at least two adults with each walking party.
- Read track signs and be alert to landmarks, so you know your approximate location in case you need rescuing.
- Have communications equipment other than mobile phones as they have limited range and are not reliable. Satellite phones and PLB's (Personal Locator Beacons) are a reliable investment that your group should incorporate into your planning.

Remember, call 000 for all emergencies (search and rescue, medical, fire or police matters). If phone coverage is poor, try 112.

Water Safety

People have suffered serious injuries in water-related accidents. There are no patrolled swimming areas in Great Sandy National Park. Avoid tragedy:

- Swimming is NOT recommended.
- Always stay with children when near water.
- Do not swim in the ocean.
- Sharks are common in the river systems and in the ocean.
- Rips are common along all beaches in Cooloola and on Fraser Island.

- Stay away from rocks. Surf and swell can wash you away.
- Do not dive or jump into the water, submerged obstacles can be anywhere.
- Natural forces constantly change watercourses and lakes.
- Upstream downpours can cause sudden flooding well downstream.
- Tracks and roads may be closed or washed away after heavy rains.
- Do not cross even slightly flooded creeks or bridges.
- Be aware that power boats are permitted in the lower reaches of the Upper Noosa River. These vessels have limited manoeuvrability. Canoeists stay close to the riverbanks!

Unforeseen events

In emergencies, tracks, campgrounds or whole sections of the park may be closed at short notice and all visitors may be asked to leave the area. Be prepared for this and have an alternative activity prepared. Just before you visit the park, visit us online at <www.nprsr.qld.gov.au>. View the latest park news items and print off a copy of the relevant conditions report for Cooloola or Fraser Island.

At all times, try to foresee possible dangers and prevent problems. Major last-minute changes to your itinerary should be reported to the ranger.

Bushfire safety

During periods of high fire danger, total fire prohibitions will be declared. This means no fire at all. Be vigilant with fuel stoves, gas lights and lanterns.

Bushfires can pose a threat to walkers and campers. They can occur without warning, so be aware of, and be prepared for, the dangers.

If there is a bushfire, follow the track to the nearest road, beach, lake or creek for refuge. Large logs, a ditch or burnt ground can also provide protection. Avoid areas of heavy fuel, such as deep leaf litter, and stay low to the ground where the air is coolest and contains the least smoke.

In extreme conditions, walking tracks and camping areas may be closed at short notice for your safety. Rangers also carry out planned fuel reduction burning. If you see a fire, call 000 and please alert a ranger office as soon as possible. Report arson immediately to police. Take note of a vehicle registration number or description of the suspected arsonists.

Sand driving safety

Driving on sand is very different to driving on normal roads and handling a four-wheel-drive vehicle can be difficult, especially for novice drivers. For essential safety tips refer to the QPWS 'Driving on sand' information (search through Cooloola, Fraser Island or Inskip web pages on <www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/parks>) for safety video clips and printable safety guides such as 'Survive your drive on Fraser Island' and 'Driving on sand'. Remember that all road rules apply on beaches and tracks.

For further safety and visitor information

Please visit us online at <www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/parks> and link to the relevant protected area you are planning to visit for the latest information.

Visitor and safety guides are also available from permit issuing centres and QPWS information centres for each section of the Great Sandy National Park and the Marine Park. Search for 'over-the-counter' bookings for addresses of these centres. See <www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/parks>.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service would like you to enjoy our special protected areas. Please help us look after some of Queensland's greatest natural treasures by leaving no trace of your visit.