

LEAVING SMALL FOOTPRINTS

There's nothing more uplifting than camping under stars after a day's scenic drive through some remote part of the Australian Outback, but it's depressing to come across an idyllic spot that has been marred by irresponsible driving and lack of camp hygiene.



A 4x4 track across the distant landscape looks inviting and causes a minimum of disturbance, but multiple tracks are ugly and contribute to erosion. Most multiple-track eyesores are caused by people taking detours around fallen branches – get out and move the offending article!

Trees stripped of living branches are wounded and the wood they provide is next to useless. Collect dead wood on the way to your camp spot or, better still, cook with gas.

You don't need what the Aborigines call a 'white-feller camp fire'. Our indigenous brothers and sisters are bush-smart and sit close to a small fire, or between two tiny fires, instead of creating a wasteful blaze that burns your boots while your back freezes.

It's possible to bush camp and leave no visible trace of your visit. If there's a loo provided, use it, not the surrounding bush. If you have to wander off with the shovel, dig as deeply as possible and burn your loo paper before you backfill.

On an overnight camp, take your rubbish with you next day and dispose of it in a bin when you reach a town. If you're camping for a longer period where there are no bins, it's unrealistic to think you're going to be able to store your rubbish safely where invading animals won't raid it and spread it all over the landscape.

It's more practical to burn the rubbish in a hot camp fire. Items that don't burn completely can be raked out of the fire, when cool and stowed in a canvas or hessian bag. Burnt rubbish doesn't attract wildlife.

You can minimise the amount of rubbish you create by leaving excess packaging at home or in town bins when you shop en route.

Don't just leave footprints – make them small ones.