ADVENTUROUS JOURNEY PLANNING HANDBOOK

A Complete Framework for Outdoor Leaders, Mentors, and Journey Leaders

Planning. Doing. Reviewing.

Andrew Davis
LogsKeptSimple.com.au

Andrew with Cubs on the escarpment, Leura, Blue Mountains National Park.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Davis

There's always time to learn how to read a map.

Andrew Davis has spent a lifetime in the bush. Starting as a Scout, progressing through Venturer and Rover, and receiving his Queen's Scout Award in 1988, he has been an active leader for over three decades. For the past 16 years he has served as a Cub and Scout Leader in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales.

In 2024, Andrew was appointed Co-District Commissioner for the Blue Mountains District - a role responsible for supporting leader development, maintaining activity standards, and overseeing the safe delivery of Scouting programs across the district.

Field Qualifications

Qualified Guide in Extremely Difficult Tracked and Untracked Bushwalking, Flat Water Canoeing and Kayaking, and Natural Abseiling. Qualifications earned on ridge lines, in gorges, and at altitude - not in classrooms. Outside his leadership roles, Andrew remains an active hiker, paddler, and abseiler in the Blue Mountains and beyond.

Why This Guide Exists

After 16 years of mentoring Scout leaders through the planning process, Andrew found himself answering the same questions repeatedly: What does a complete risk assessment actually look like? When should the mentor be involved? What is the difference between a route plan that satisfies the form and one that keeps people safe? This guide is the written answer to those questions.

It is written for the Scout leader planning their first overnight expedition, the experienced leader who wants a structured framework rather than instinct, and the mentor who needs to know what a good plan looks like when it arrives for approval. The eleven planning elements in Part One are not bureaucratic requirements - they are the things that determine whether a journey goes well or goes wrong.

Logs Kept Simple

In 2023, Andrew built LogsKeptSimple.com.au and a companion iOS app, frustrated with the poor usability of existing GPS tracking tools for outdoor leaders. It has since grown into a fully featured Adventurous Journey planning website used by leaders across Australia. Android support was added in 2025.

Part Two of this guide walks through the Journey Planning platform in full.

CONTENTS

QUICK START REFERENCE

Use this section before you plan. Three pages you can print, pin up, and work through. Everything here references a chapter where you can find the full detail.
This checklist should always be used. Every time. As you get used to the content, you will need to refer to each section less and less or only some for further clarification, but a good checklist makes sure you remember everything.

QS-1 The 11 Planning Elements at a Glance

Element	Done when...	Tick	See
Journey Overview	Purpose, dates, objectives defined. Mentor and guide identified. Participant list confirmed.	☐	Ch. 1-2
Approvers	Mentor and guide roles agreed, contact details confirmed, engaged from the start.	☐	Ch. 14
Route Plan	Route on topo maps, all legs with distance/timing, elevation profile, alternative route documented.	☐	Ch. 4
Risk Assessment	All hazards identified, controls specific and verifiable, residual risk accepted by mentor.	☐	Ch. 5
Meal Plan	Every meal for every day and every person, dietary needs confirmed, emergency food included.	☐	Ch. 6
Transport Plan	Every leg documented, drivers and vehicles named, passengers assigned, contingency in place.	☐	Ch. 7
Budget	All costs researched (not estimated), contingency applied, per-person total communicated.	☐	Ch. 8
Activity Plan	Supervision ratios, participant roles, field emergency procedures documented.	☐	Ch. 9
Consent	Consent obtained from all participants or guardians. Individuals understand risks and demands.	☐	Ch. 10
Trip Intention	Lodged with NPWS (or relevant authority). Confirmation evidence stored. Contacts briefed.	☐	Ch. 11
Notifications	Families, leadership, land managers, and emergency services notified. Records kept.	☐	Ch. 12

QS-2 Planning Timeline on a Page

A standard journey needs 12 weeks of planning lead time. Starting late compresses everything - documents get rushed, mentors don't have time to review properly, and critical gaps go unnoticed. If you have less than 12 weeks, start immediately and flag the compression to your mentor.

When	Focus	Key Deliverables
T–12 to 10 wks	Intent & Scope	Journey purpose and route concept. Participant profile. Mentor engaged.
T–10 to 8 wks	Core Framework	Journey record created. Planning calendar locked. Constraints identified.
T–8 to 6 wks	Technical Planning	Route Plan draft. First-pass Risk Assessment. Water sources identified.
T–6 to 4 wks	Support Plans	Budget, Transport, Meal, and Water Plans completed. Mentor feedback round.
T–4 to 3 wks	Review Cycle 1	Documents reviewed against checklists. Submitted for mentor feedback.
T–3 to 2 wks	Rework & Close Gaps	Mentor comments addressed. All documents updated. Resubmitted.
T–14 to 10 days	External Lodgement	Trip intention lodged. Activity Plan, consent, and notifications finalised.
T–7 to 2 days	Final Readiness	Weather and fire checks. Final briefing. Go/no-go gates prepared.
T–24 hours	Execution Check	Conditions confirmed. Route reconfirmed. Comms test complete.

QS-3 Go / No-Go Decision Framework

Answer these five questions honestly before departure. If you cannot answer yes to all of them, the journey is not ready. Set your thresholds during planning - vague criteria collapse under social pressure on departure morning.

1. Is the plan approved?

Mentor and guide have reviewed and approved the complete, final plan. Not a

☐ Yes - proceed ☐ No - resolve before departure

2. Is the weather within thresholds?

Current forecast meets the go/no-go criteria set during planning. BOM, RFS, and Windy

☐ Yes - proceed ☐ No - resolve before departure

3. Are all participants ready?

Medical flags reviewed. Physical readiness confirmed. No last-minute changes to the participant list that affect the risk assessment.

☐ Yes - proceed ☐ No - resolve before departure

4. Is external lodgement complete?

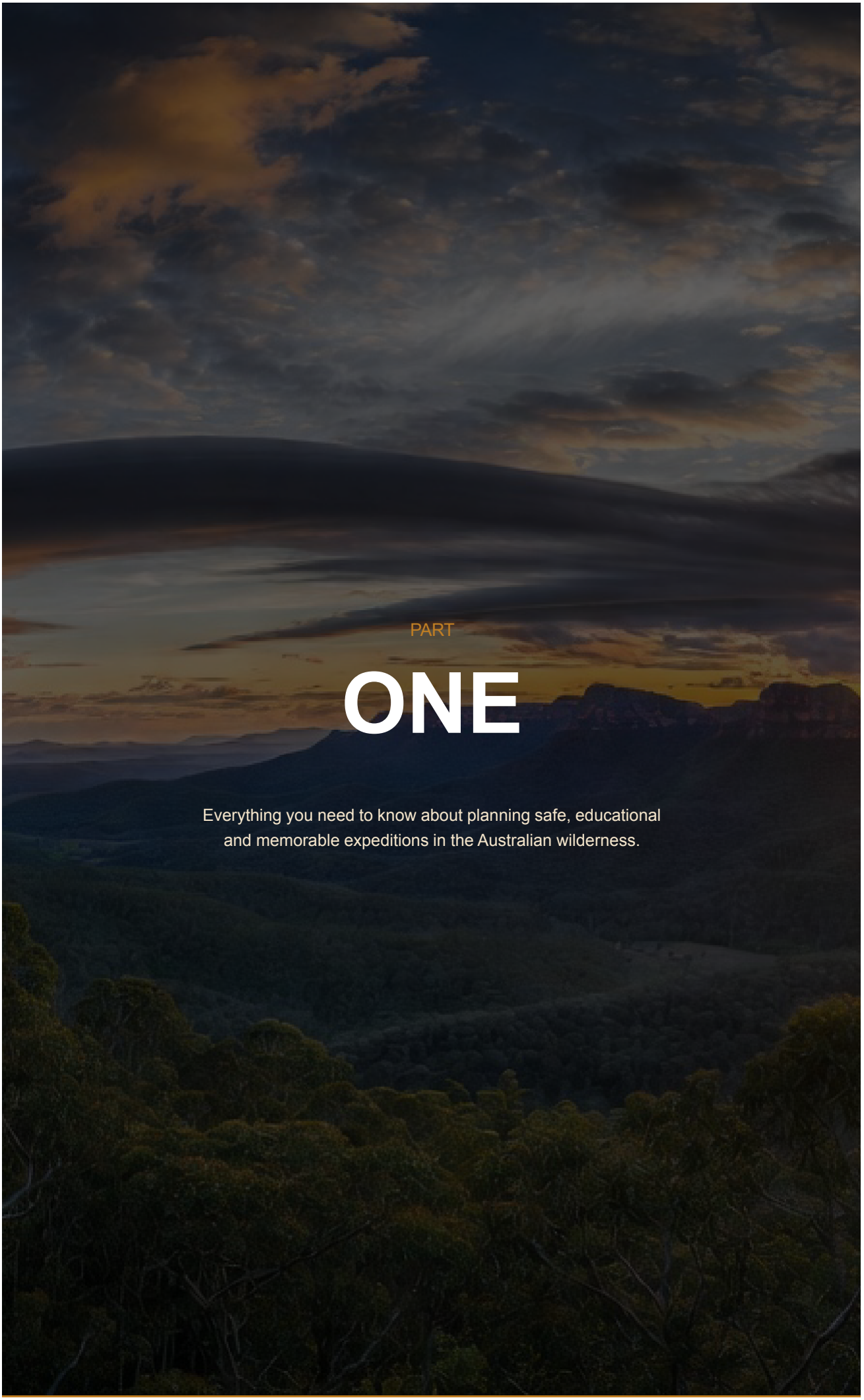
Trip intention lodged and confirmation evidence stored. Emergency contacts briefed and confirmed they understand their role.

☐ Yes - proceed ☐ No - resolve before departure

5. Can you execute the plan as approved?

Drivers confirmed. Gear checked. Comms working. You can explain every element of

☐ Yes - proceed ☐ No - resolve before departure



PART

ONE

Everything you need to know about planning safe, educational and memorable expeditions in the Australian wilderness.

CHAPTER 1

Igniting the Spark – The Why and How of Journey Planning

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Why planning is what makes adventure possible, not the opposite of it
- What good planning actually does: decision points, shared understanding, records that matter
- How to use this guide and where to start

Typical time: 15 min to read; sets the foundation for everything that follows

"Good plans do not prevent things from going wrong. They determine what happens when something does."

Dawn on the trail. the moment every journey begins.

Picture the soft glow of dawn filtering through ancient eucalypts, the crisp air filled with the calls of lyrebirds as your group steps onto the trail. This is what adventurous journeys are for. Moments that etch themselves into memory, forge bonds, build resilience, and ignite a lifelong connection to wild places.

None of it happens by accident. Every one of those moments is the return on an investment made weeks earlier, at a desk, with a map, a risk assessment, and a budget spreadsheet. This guide is about that investment. It is not glamorous work. It is, however, the work that makes everything else possible.

Why Planning Is Not Optional

The Australian bush is not a controlled environment. Flash floods arrive without much warning. Weather shifts faster than forecasts predict. Help, in genuinely remote terrain, can be hours away. A group that has planned for these possibilities has options when they arise. A group that has not is making decisions under pressure with no framework to fall back on.

Planning also protects the people who are not on the trail. Parents who sign a consent form are trusting that someone has thought carefully about what their child is walking into. Mentors who approve a plan are making a professional judgement that the risks have been identified and managed. That trust and that judgement are only meaningful if the planning behind them is genuine.

> *'The lyrebirds, the crisp air, the camaraderie around the campfire - all of it is real, and all of it depends on someone having done the boring parts first. This guide is about the boring parts.'*

What Good Planning Actually Does

A well-constructed plan does three things that an improvised one cannot.

It **anticipates the decision points** before they arise under pressure. The creek crossing that looks straightforward on the map may not be after three days of rain. The turnaround time that feels conservative at the trailhead becomes critical when a participant rolls an ankle on Day 2. A plan that has

already worked through these scenarios gives the Journey Leader a framework for making good decisions quickly, rather than good decisions slowly at exactly the wrong moment.

It **creates a shared understanding** across everyone involved. When the mentor, the guide, the participants, and their families have all seen the same plan, there are no hidden assumptions. Everyone knows the route, the risks, the contingencies, and what happens if something goes wrong. Under pressure, a group that has rehearsed the what-ifs executes far better than one encountering them for the first time.

It **produces a record that matters when it counts.** A lodged trip intention, a briefed emergency contact, a route plan with grid references and daily positions: these are not administrative formalities. They are the information that search and rescue coordinators need to act quickly and effectively if the situation requires it.

How to Use This Guide

The eleven planning elements in Chapter 2 form the spine of everything that follows. Each element gets its own chapter. Each chapter covers what the element is, why it matters, what completion looks like, and what the common failure points are.

The first time through, it will feel like a lot. It is a lot. The second journey is easier. By the third, most of it becomes instinct. What feels like a checklist now will eventually feel like a conversation you have with yourself before every trip.

Start 12 to 10 weeks out. Work through the elements in roughly the order they appear, since earlier decisions shape later ones. Engage your mentor from the beginning, not at the end. And use the Quick Start pages at the front of this guide as your running reference for what needs to be done and when.

> **KEY PRINCIPLE** Planning is not the opposite of adventure. It is what makes adventure possible.

CHAPTER 2

The Planning Spine – Core Elements to Complete

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- The eleven planning elements every journey requires, no exceptions
- What 'complete' actually looks like for each element
- How the elements connect and depend on each other

Typical time: Reference throughout your planning cycle

"Like the sturdy spine supporting a hiker's pack, these core elements hold your journey steady. Each is vital, ensuring comprehensive preparation that leaves no room for oversight."

Every adventurous journey, whether a single overnight camp or a week-long wilderness traverse, requires the same eleven planning elements to be completed before departure. These are not suggestions or optional extras. They are the minimum standard of preparation that keeps participants safe, keeps leaders accountable, and gives the journey the best possible chance of succeeding on its own terms.

The planning spine diagram below shows how the elements relate to each other, with the journey overview at the centre and the detailed plans radiating outward. Each element informs and depends on the others: the route plan shapes the risk assessment, the risk assessment shapes the meal and water plan, and all of them together form the basis for the consent and notification process.

The Planning Spine – Element Relationship Diagram

The table below defines each planning element and describes what completion looks like in practice.

Planning Item	What Completion Looks Like
Journey Overview	Journey type, dates, purpose, and educational objectives defined. Mentor and supervising guide identified. Participant list confirmed with relevant needs noted.
Approvers	Experienced mentor and guide identified, roles and responsibilities agreed, and contact details confirmed before planning advances.
Route Plan	Route plotted on topographic maps with start/end points, waypoints, legs, distances, timings, elevation profile, and at least one alternative route documented.
Risk Assessment	All significant hazards identified, likelihood and severity assessed, controls assigned to responsible persons, residual risk reviewed and accepted by the mentor.
Meal Plan	Meals planned for every day and every group member, quantities calculated, dietary requirements and allergies accommodated.
Transport Plan	All movement legs documented, mode, route, driver/operator, timing, vehicle capacity, and contingency for delays or breakdowns.
Budget	All costs identified and categorised, realistic prices researched, contingency applied, per-person contribution calculated and communicated to families.
Activity Plan	Detailed operational plan covering supervision ratios, participant roles, scheduled activities, group management strategy, and emergency procedures for the field.
Consent	Consent obtained from parents or guardians for youth members, or from adult participants directly. Consent records confirm that individuals understand the route, risks, physical demands, and emergency procedures.
Trip Intention	Trip intention lodged with the relevant authority (e.g., NPWS), including route, dates, group size, emergency contacts, and vehicle details. Confirmation evidence stored.
Notifications	All relevant parties notified, families, organisation leadership, land managers, and local emergency services where required. Notification records kept.

This spine ensures holistic coverage, from vision to execution, preventing gaps that could compromise safety or success.

> *'There is a version of journey planning where you complete seven of these eleven elements and the four you skip feel like the ones that didn't really apply this time. This guide exists to explain why they did.'*

CHAPTER 3

The Timeline – Orchestrating Your Preparation

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- The T-12 to T-0 planning timeline and what happens at each phase
- Why iterative planning beats leaving things to the last minute
- How weather runs as a thread through every phase

Typical time: Set your planning calendar at T-10 weeks

"Time is the canvas on which your adventure is painted. Master it, and your journey flows like a river through the bush, smooth and purposeful."

One of the most common causes of poor journey outcomes is not a lack of knowledge, it is a lack of time. Plans that begin too late become reactive rather than deliberate. Documents get rushed, feedback loops get skipped, and critical details fall through the gaps. The timeline in this chapter exists to prevent that.

Good planning is iterative by nature. No route plan survives first contact with the terrain unchanged. No risk assessment captures every hazard in a single sitting. No budget lands perfectly on the first estimate. The timeline is structured to give each element room to breathe, drafted early, reviewed honestly, refined under mentor guidance, and confirmed close to departure when real conditions are known.

The phases build on each other deliberately. Early weeks establish the foundations: purpose, participants, and a credible route concept. Middle weeks build the technical detail: risks assessed, logistics costed, meals and water planned. Final weeks shift from building to confirming, closing loops, lodging intentions, and making the go/no-go call with current information.

Weather is not a late-stage consideration. It runs as a thread through every phase, from early seasonal pattern research right through to the 24-hour check. Water planning follows the same logic, sources identified during route planning, quantities confirmed during meal and logistics planning, and carry capacity verified against the final route before departure.

Use this timeline as a default rhythm for standard journeys. Compress it for simpler, well-known routes. Extend it, or add additional review cycles, for remote, technically demanding, or large-group expeditions. The key principle is the same regardless of scale: begin earlier than feels necessary, and use the time you create.

Time Out	Focus	Actions & Deliverables
T–12 to 10 weeks	Intent & Scope	Define journey purpose, educational goals, draft route concept, participant profile, early mentor consult, initial weather pattern review via BOM.
T–10 to 8 weeks	Core Framework	Create Journey record, assign Mentor and Guide, establish planning calendar, identify key constraints, preliminary weather risk identification.
T–8 to 6 weeks	Technical Planning	Build Route Plan draft, first-pass Risk Assessment, identify hazards, control intent, fallback route options, identify water sources per route leg, integrate weather contingencies into route and risk.
T–6 to 4 weeks	Support Plans	Complete Budget, Transport Plan, Meal Plan, Water Plan (quantities, purification, carry capacity), align staffing and comms, test assumptions with mentor, detailed weather forecast review.
T–4 to 3 weeks	Review Cycle 1	Quality review against checklists, generate PDFs, submit first wave for mentor and guide feedback, confirm weather thresholds in controls.
T–3 to 2 weeks	Rework & Close Gaps	Address comments, tighten controls, confirm logistics, update all impacted documents, resubmit where needed, monitor long-range forecasts.
T–14 to 10 days	External Lodgement	Complete Trip Intention lodging, capture evidence, finalize Activity Plan, Operoo, and ANS alignment, mid-range weather check for go/no-go.
T–7 to 2 days	Final Readiness	Weather and fire checks via BOM and RFS apps, final briefing package, role confirmation, emergency contacts verified, go/no-go call gates prepared.
T–24 hours	Execution Check	Final conditions check, route and timings reconfirmed, comms test complete, all documents accessible offline.

This timeline allows for layered building, iteration, and adaptation, ensuring your plan is robust and responsive. An early start builds depth; late checks confirm readiness.

> *'Experienced leaders have a saying: the journey begins twelve weeks before the journey begins. Less experienced leaders discover this the hard way - usually around T-minus two weeks, when everything is urgent at once and the mentor hasn't seen a single document.'*

CHAPTER 4

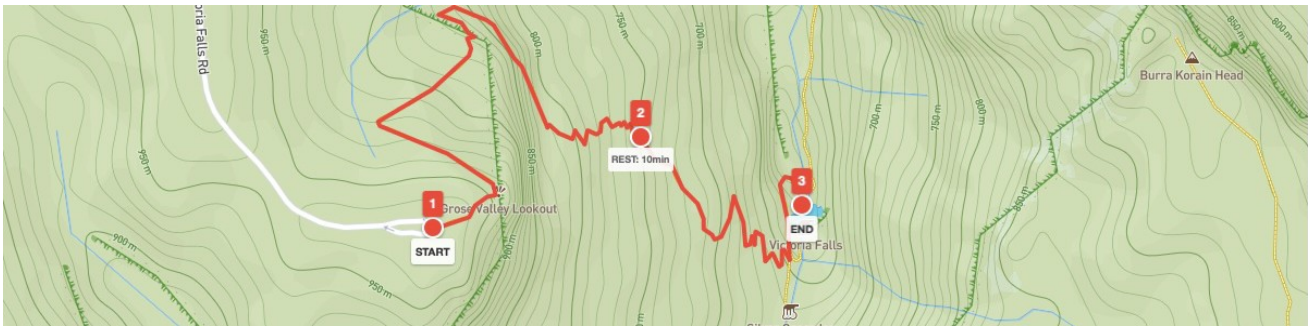
Route Planning – Charting Your Path

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- How to read a topographic map and plot a route specific to your group
- Using Naismith's Rule to calculate realistic leg timings
- Documenting the route in a format that serves approvers and search-and-rescue

Typical time: 3–6 hours for a standard 3-day route

"The route is your narrative's backbone. Plot it with care, and the story unfolds beautifully, guiding you through valleys and peaks with confidence."



A topographic route map with plotted waypoints. the foundation of every route plan.

Why Every Journey Needs a Thoughtfully Crafted Route Plan

A route plan is not something you download. It is not a trail description copied from a hiking website, a screen shot of someone else's GPS track, or a rough sketch of where you think you might go. A genuine route plan is a deliberate, original document, crafted specifically for your group, your dates, your participants, and your purpose.

This distinction matters enormously in the field. A route copied from the internet reflects someone else's fitness, someone else's group size, someone else's conditions on a different day in a different season. It carries none of the thinking that makes a route plan valuable: the assessment of your group's capability against the terrain, the identification of water sources at your expected pace, the decision about where to stop if someone is struggling, or the turnaround point if the weather turns. That thinking cannot be borrowed. It has to be done.

A well-crafted route plan communicates intent. It tells your mentor, your approvers, your emergency contacts, and your group exactly where you will be and when. It is the document search-and-rescue will use if something goes wrong. It is the baseline against which you make decisions in the field, to push on, to rest, to turn around, or to call for help. A plan built on someone else's experience cannot serve any of those purposes reliably.

Crafting a route plan also develops the planner. The process of sitting with a topographic map, tracing contour lines, identifying water sources, measuring leg distances, calculating timings, and anticipating hazards builds genuine navigational literacy. Leaders who plan routes understand terrain in a way that those who follow downloaded tracks do not. That understanding is what keeps groups safe when conditions diverge from expectations, which, in the Australian bush, they invariably do.

Reading a Topographic Map

A topographic map represents three-dimensional terrain on a flat surface. Understanding it is the foundational skill of route planning. Before plotting a single waypoint, a route planner must be able to read the map fluently.

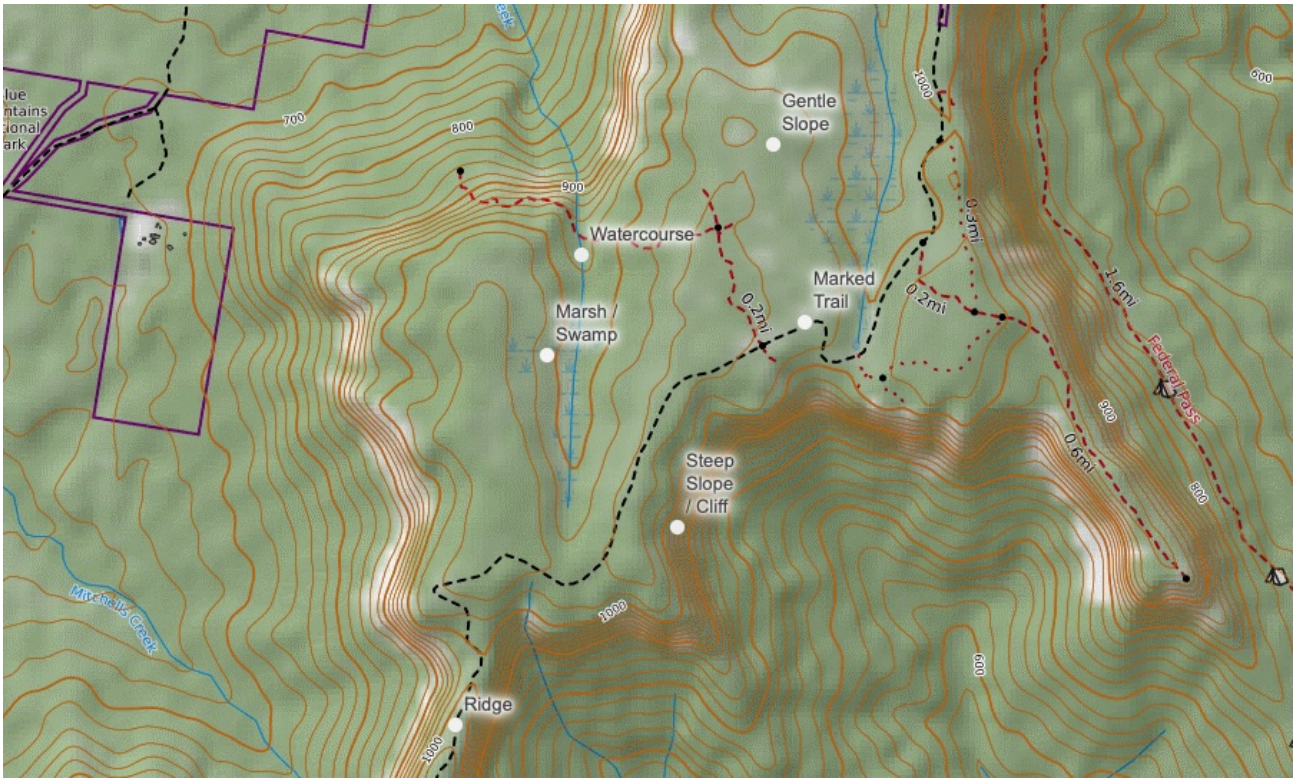
Contour lines are the most important feature. Each line represents a constant elevation above sea level, and the vertical distance between adjacent lines is the contour interval, typically 10m or 20m on Australian 1:25,000 maps.

Where contour lines are closely spaced, the terrain is steep. Where they are widely spaced, the terrain is gentle. Where they form tight concentric rings, you are looking at a summit or hilltop. A series of V-shapes pointing uphill indicates a valley or creek; V-shapes pointing downhill indicate a ridge or spur.

Map scale determines how much detail is visible and how distances translate to the ground. A 1:25,000 map means 1cm on the map equals 250m on the ground. This is the standard scale for detailed route planning in Australian bushland. A 1:50,000 map covers more area but shows less detail, suitable for an overview but not for precise leg planning. Always use the largest-scale map available for the area you are travelling through.

Map features to locate and understand before planning any route:

- Marked trails and fire trails (solid and dashed lines)
- Watercourses, permanent (solid blue) and intermittent (dashed blue)
- Vegetation boundaries and cleared areas
- Cliffs and rock faces (hashed lines on the contour)
- Saddles and passes (contour lines that pinch inward between two high points)
- Spurs (ridges running downhill from a high point, often the safest line of travel)
- Creek junctions and distinctive landforms that can serve as navigation checkpoints



How to Read a Topographic Map, Key Features

Choosing and Plotting a Route

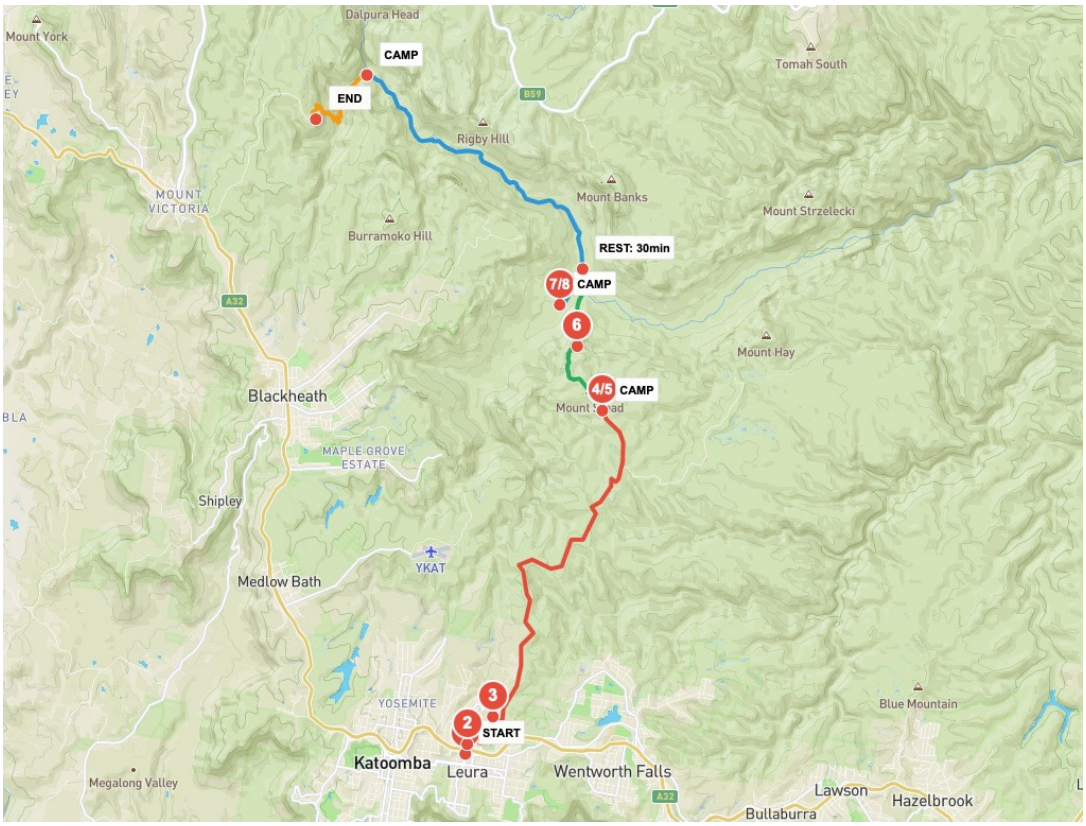
Route selection begins with the question: what line through this terrain is appropriate for this group on this day? The answer is shaped by the group's fitness and experience, the intended daily distance, the available water, and the margin for error if something goes wrong.

Daily distance and effort should be calibrated to the least capable member of the group, not the most capable. As a general guide:

- Beginners or younger participants: 8–12km per day on moderate terrain
- Intermediate participants: 12–18km per day on variable terrain
- Experienced participants: 18–25km per day, including significant elevation
- Always reduce these figures for hot weather, heavy packs, technical terrain, or multi-day fatigue

These are starting points, not rules. The elevation profile of each day matters as much as the horizontal distance. A 10km day with 800m of ascent is far more demanding than a 15km day on flat ground.

Plotting the route is done on the topographic map before any digital tools are used. Trace the intended path with a pencil, following logical terrain lines, ridges, formed trails, creek flats, and mark every significant waypoint: start, end, water sources, rest stops, camp sites, road crossings, and any point where a navigation decision must be made. These become the structure of your legs.



Route Selection on a Topo Map, Annotated Example

Breaking the Route into Legs

A leg is the section of route between two consecutive waypoints. Breaking the route into legs is the mechanism that makes a route plan operationally useful, it allows you to track progress in the field, make go/no-go decisions at checkpoints, and estimate time of arrival at camp or egress points with precision.

Each leg should be defined by:

- A clear start and end waypoint, both with 6-figure grid references
- Horizontal distance, measured along the planned path on the map using a ruler or map wheel
- Total ascent for the leg, calculated by counting contour line crossings uphill and multiplying by the contour interval
- Total descent, calculated the same way for downhill sections
- Estimated walking time, calculated using Naismith's Rule (see below)
- Any significant features or hazards on that leg, creek crossings, cliff sections, exposed ridges, navigation decision points

Leg length should be set by meaningful waypoints on the ground, a saddle, a water source, a junction, a campsite, not by arbitrary distance. A leg of 3km with a critical creek crossing is more meaningful than a leg of 5km on a straight fire trail. The waypoints are what you will navigate to in the field.

How to measure horizontal distance on a 1:25,000 map:

Use a piece of string or a map wheel to follow the planned path exactly, including bends and curves. Lay the string against the scale bar, or convert the measured length using the map scale: on a 1:25,000 map, 1cm = 250m, so 4cm = 1km. Do not measure straight-line distances unless the terrain is completely flat and featureless, on Australian bush terrain, the actual path distance is almost always longer than the straight line.

Day 1

Leg	Grid Ref	Map	Leg Desc	Mag Bearing	Height G/L	Leg Dist	Total Dist	Track Cond	Rest	Leg Time	Elapsed
				(°)	(m)	(km)	(km)		(min)	(min)	
1	526665	KATOOMBA 8930-1S	START		995 m		0.00	Medium Going	0		1800
2	527668	KATOOMBA 8930-1S		24°	+1.00 m / -0.00 m	0.24	0.24	Medium Going	0	7.27	1807
3	533675	KATOOMBA 8930-1S		55°	+0.00 m / -23.00 m	0.91	1.15	Medium Going	0	27.99	1835
4	557749	KATOOMBA 8930-1S	END	32°	+0.00 m / -66.00 m	7.87	9.02	Medium Going	0	238.08	2233

Day 1 Summary		
Total Distance:	9.02 km	Legs: 3
Elevation Gain:	+1 m	Start Elevation: 995 m
Elevation Loss:	-89 m	End Elevation: 907 m
Net Elevation Change:	-88 m	
Moving Time:	4h 33m	Rest Time: 0 min
Start Point:	START	
End Point:	END	
Maps Used:	KATOOMBA 8930-1S	

Breaking a Route into Legs, Worked Example Table

Grid References

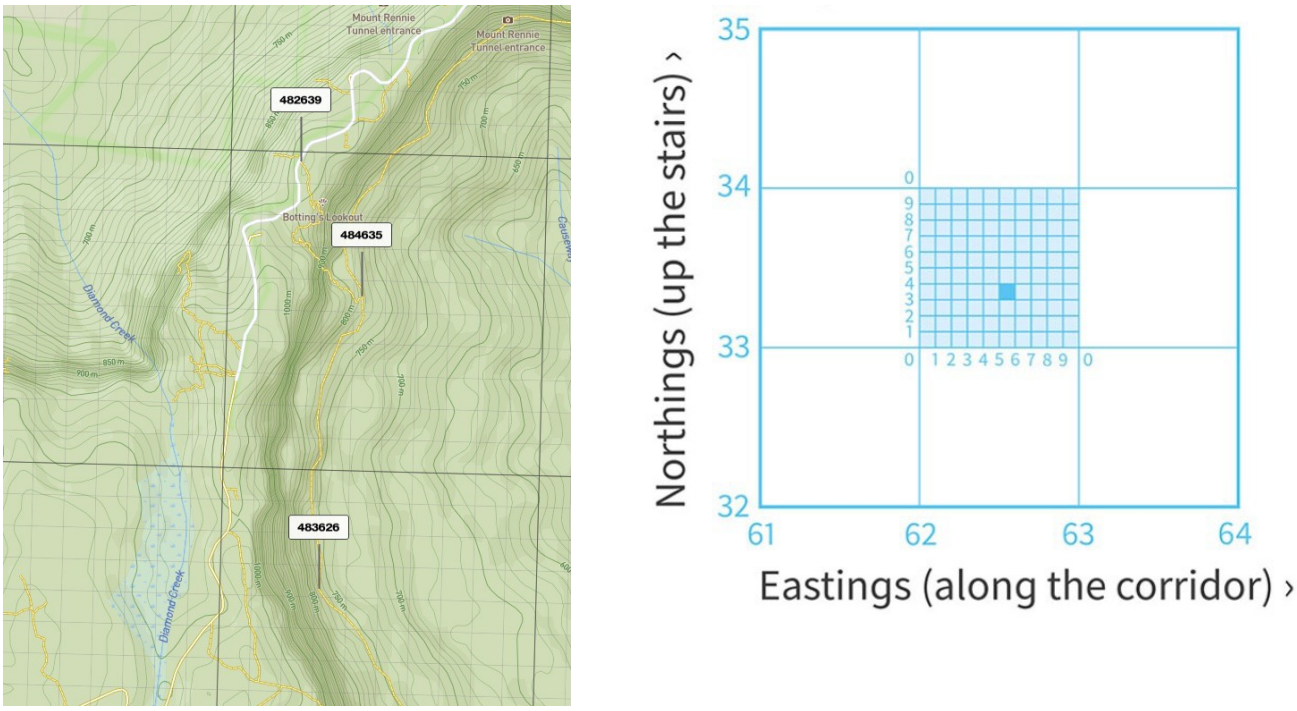
Grid references provide precise, unambiguous locations on a map, essential for navigation checkpoints, emergency response, and communicating positions to rescue services. Australian topographic maps use the Map Grid of Australia (MGA), based on the Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) projection.

A **6-figure grid reference** locates a point to within 100 metres. It is read as two sets of three digits: the easting (how far across, read left to right) followed by the northing (how far up, read bottom to top). The mnemonic is *along the corridor, then up the stairs*.

To read a 6-figure grid reference:

1. Find the two vertical (easting) grid lines that bracket your point. The left-hand line gives the first two digits of the easting. Estimate how far across the grid square your point sits, in tenths, this gives the third digit.
2. Find the two horizontal (northing) grid lines that bracket your point. The lower line gives the first two digits of the northing. Estimate how far up the grid square your point sits, in tenths, this gives the third digit.
3. Combine: easting (3 digits) then northing (3 digits).

Every waypoint in a route plan must have a 6-figure grid reference. Descriptions like 'the saddle near the creek' or 'the big flat rock' are useless to someone who wasn't there, and potentially dangerous if that description must be passed to search-and-rescue by phone.



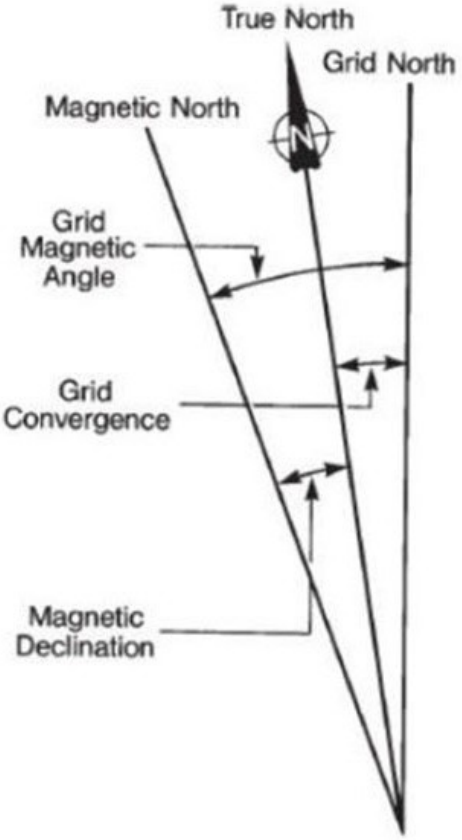
Grid references: eastings (along the corridor) then northings (up the stairs).

Magnetic vs True North

Maps are aligned to true north, the direction to the geographic North Pole. Compasses point to magnetic north, a different point that shifts over time due to changes in the Earth's magnetic field. The angular difference between the two is called **magnetic declination** (also called magnetic variation).

In eastern Australia, magnetic declination is currently approximately 12–13° east, meaning magnetic north sits to the east of true north. If you take a bearing from a map and apply it directly to a compass without correcting for declination, you will walk in the wrong direction, potentially by hundreds of metres over a few kilometres.

To convert from a true bearing (map) to a magnetic bearing (compass): add the declination value for your area. To convert from magnetic back to true: subtract it. The mnemonic is *Grid to Magnetic, Add* (GMA). Declination values are printed on Australian topographic maps and can be verified at Geoscience Australia's online calculator for your specific location and date.



Magnetic Declination, True North vs Magnetic North

Elevation Gains and Losses

Every metre of ascent costs energy and time. Every steep descent carries injury risk. Elevation data transforms a flat route trace into a realistic picture of what the day will actually feel like, and it is one of the most commonly underestimated factors in novice route planning.

Reading elevation from contour lines:

Count the number of contour lines crossed in the uphill direction on each leg. Multiply by the contour interval (10m or 20m depending on the map). This gives the total ascent for that leg. Repeat for downhill crossings to get total descent. Note that a route that goes up and then down does not cancel out, both figures are meaningful, because ascent costs time and energy, and descent costs leg strength and concentration.

Recognising terrain difficulty from the map:

- Contour lines spaced less than 2mm apart on a 1:25,000 map indicate slopes steeper than 45°, generally impassable or extremely hazardous without specialised equipment
- Contour lines spaced 2–5mm apart indicate steep but manageable terrain, slow going, high energy cost, significant risk if wet
- Contour lines spaced more than 5mm apart indicate moderate to gentle slopes, typical walking terrain

An elevation profile, a cross-section graph showing altitude against distance, translates this information into a format that is easy to share with participants and approvers, and immediately reveals whether a day's route is front-loaded (hard start, easier finish), back-loaded (easy start, hard finish, high risk of fatigue at the wrong time), or reasonably distributed.

Sample Route Elevation Profile

Naismith's Rule for Leg Timings

Naismith's Rule is the standard method for estimating walking time in the bush. It provides a consistent, objective basis for calculating leg timings and total daily duration, replacing guesswork with arithmetic.

The base formula:

> **Allow 1 hour for every 5km of horizontal distance, plus 1 hour for every 600m of ascent.**

This produces the Naismith time, the minimum expected duration for a fit, unladen adult walking efficiently. In practice, route planners must adjust this figure for their specific group and conditions.

Applying the rule step by step:

1. For each leg, note the horizontal distance (km) and total ascent (m).
2. Calculate the distance component: divide horizontal distance by 5 to get hours.
3. Calculate the ascent component: divide total ascent by 600 to get hours.
4. Add the two components together for the raw Naismith time.
5. Apply a group fitness buffer of 10–30% depending on participant age, fitness, pack weight, and terrain roughness.
6. For legs with significant descent (>300m), add approximately half the ascent time as a descent penalty.

Worked example:

A leg runs from a saddle at 850m to a campsite at 420m, passing over a ridge at 1,050m. Horizontal distance is 6.5.km. Total ascent (saddle to ridge): 200m. Total descent (ridge to camp): 630m.

- Distance component: 6.5 ÷ 5 = 1.3 hours
- Ascent component: 200 ÷ 600 = 0.33 hours
- Descent penalty: 630m of descent, significant, add approx 0.5 × (630 ÷ 600) = 0.53 hours
- Raw Naismith time: 1.3 + 0.33 + 0.53 = **2.16 hours (approx. 2 hrs 10 min)**
- Apply 20% group buffer: 2.16 × 1.2 = **approx. 2 hrs 35 min**

Setting turnaround triggers and timing gates

Naismith times per leg allow you to set timing gates, expected times of arrival at each waypoint. These are not aspirational targets; they are decision points. If the group arrives at a gate significantly behind schedule, the Journey Leader must assess whether to continue, shorten the route, or turn around. The gate times should be written into the route plan and briefed to the group before departure.

The turnaround trigger is the latest possible time at which the group can still safely return to safety or reach the next shelter before dark. Calculate this for each day by working backwards from last light, not forwards from the start.

STRONG PRACTICE Build your route plan on paper with a topographic map before using any digital tools. Digital tools are excellent for refining and sharing, but the thinking must happen on the map first.

STRONG PRACTICE Include timing gates and turnaround triggers for every leg in the written route plan, not just total daily distance. These are the tools that allow real-time decisions in the field.

PITFALL Measuring straight-line distances on the map rather than following the actual path. On undulating bush terrain, the real distance is consistently 15–30% longer than the straight line.

PITFALL Using a route copied from the internet without rebuilding the leg structure, grid references, timings, and water sources for your specific group. Another leader's track is not your route plan.

CHAPTER 5

Risk Assessment – Taming the Unknown

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- The difference between a hazard, a risk, and a control
- Using the 5×5 matrix to rate likelihood and consequence
- What to do when a residual risk rates High or Extreme

Typical time: 2–4 hours for a standard 3-day journey

"In the heart of the wild, shadows lurk. But with keen eyes and sharper minds, we illuminate them. Risk assessment is the shield that turns threats into thrilling challenges."

Remote cliff terrain. exactly the kind of environment that demands thorough, specific risk controls.

Why Risk Assessment is Non-Negotiable

Every adventurous journey carries risk. That is not a flaw, it is the point. The challenge of the bush, the uncertainty of weather, the physical demands of terrain: these are the forces that build resilience, test character, and create the experiences that participants remember for life. The role of risk assessment is not to eliminate that challenge. It is to ensure that the risks your group faces are identified, understood, and managed to a level that is acceptable before anyone leaves the trailhead.

A risk assessment done well is an act of leadership. It demonstrates that the person responsible for a group has thought carefully about what could go wrong, has put specific measures in place to reduce the likelihood and impact of those things, and has communicated that thinking clearly to the people who will approve and participate in the journey. It is the difference between a leader who hopes things will be fine and a leader who has ensured they are likely to be.

A risk assessment done poorly, or not done at all, is not a neutral act. It is a transfer of risk onto the participants, their families, and the organisation, without their knowledge or consent. When something goes wrong on an un-assessed or inadequately assessed journey, the consequences fall on people who trusted the Journey Leader to have done this work.

The second important truth about risk assessment is that it must be specific. A generic risk assessment, copied from a template or recycled from a previous trip, is almost worthless. The hazards on your route are shaped by your specific terrain, your specific weather window, your specific group, their ages, fitness levels, experience, medical needs, and emotional readiness. A risk assessment that does not reflect those specifics cannot guide good decisions in the field.

> *'Participants will be briefed on safe behaviour' is not a control. It is a hope dressed in a hard hat. Controls change the likelihood or consequence of harm. Telling someone to be careful does neither.'*

How Far is Far Enough?

A risk assessment should be thorough without being exhaustive.

The right test is not ‘’what could possibly go wrong?’ but ‘what hazards are genuinely present for this group, on this route, on these days?’.

Hazards that exist only in theory, rockfall on a flat forest trail, meteorite strike, or lightning on a short coastal walk, dilute the document and draw attention away from real risks.

If a hazard requires imagination to place on your specific route, then leave it out.

Similarly, some hazards can be discounted outright when the environment makes them impossible. There is no point listing hyperthermia as a risk on a winter alpine journey. Equally, risks thoroughly eliminated by the activity design - if the route never approaches cliff edges, then they do not need to appear in the assessment.

Document what you are managing, not everything that exists in the universe of outdoor risk.

Understanding Hazards, Risks, and Controls

These three terms are often used interchangeably, but they mean distinct things, and confusing them produces poor risk assessments.

A **hazard** is anything that has the potential to cause harm. It exists independently of whether anyone is present. A cliff edge is a hazard. A fast-moving creek is a hazard. Hot rocks, dehydration, lightning, bushfire, all hazards.
Identifying hazards is the first step: walk the route in your mind (and ideally in person for complex journeys), and ask for every environment and activity: *what could hurt someone here?*

A **risk** is the combination of the likelihood that a hazard will cause harm and the severity of that harm if it does. A cliff edge in a flat meadow where participants are unlikely to approach it may be a low risk, even though the consequence of a fall would be catastrophic. The same cliff edge on a narrow ridge that the group must traverse in wet weather is an extreme risk. Risk is contextual, it depends on your group, your conditions, and your controls.

A **control** is a specific, actionable measure that reduces either the likelihood or the severity of harm from a hazard. Controls must be observable and testable. "Be careful near cliffs" is not a control, it is a wish. "All participants clip into fixed line before approaching cliff edge" is a control. "Route adjusted to avoid cliff traverse if overnight rain exceeds 10mm" is a control. If a control cannot be verified, by the Journey Leader in the field, by a mentor reviewing the document, or by an auditor after an incident, it provides no real protection.

Residual risk is the risk that remains after all controls have been applied. Every risk assessment must assess residual risk, not just initial risk. The purpose of controls is to reduce the risk profile, and the adequacy of your controls is judged by whether they actually achieve that reduction.

The 5×5 Risk Matrix

The standard tool for assessing and communicating risk in adventurous activities is the 5×5 risk matrix. It plots two variables against each other: **Likelihood** (how probable is it that the hazard causes harm?) on one axis, and **Consequence** (how severe would the harm be?) on the other. The intersection of the two scores produces a risk rating.

Likelihood is rated A to E:

Rating	Description
A - Almost Certain	Will very likely occur during this activity. The conditions for harm are present and the group will encounter them.
B - Likely	More likely to occur than not. Has happened frequently in similar activities.
C - Possible	Could occur. Has happened in similar activities. Not the expected outcome, but a realistic one.
D - Unlikely	Not expected to occur. Has happened rarely in similar activities.
E - Rare	Would only occur in exceptional circumstances. Very low probability.

Consequence is rated 1 to 5:

Rating	Description
1 - Negligible	No injury or minor discomfort. No medical treatment required.
2 - Minor	Minor injury or illness. First aid required. No lasting impact.
3 - Moderate	Medical treatment required. Possible short-term impact on participant.
4 - Major	Serious injury or illness. Hospitalisation likely. Significant lasting impact possible.
5 - Catastrophic	Death or permanent serious disability.

The combination of these two scores produces a risk rating of **Low, Medium, High, or Extreme**, using the matrix below.

5×5 Risk Assessment Matrix

What the Risk Rating Means, and What You Must Do

The risk rating is not just a label. It is a decision gate. Each rating carries a specific obligation for the planner and the Journey Leader.

LOW, The risk is acceptable as assessed. Standard controls apply. Document and proceed.

MEDIUM, The risk is manageable. Ensure controls are in place and being actively monitored. Document clearly and proceed with controls confirmed.

HIGH, The risk is significant. Additional or alternative mitigations must be examined before proceeding. If the risk can be brought down to Medium or Low through additional controls, the activity may proceed with those controls firmly in place and actively monitored. A residual High rating is the maximum acceptable level for an activity to proceed, and it must be explicitly approved by the mentor or guide, with the specific controls documented and verified.

EXTREME, The activity cannot proceed in its current form. An Extreme residual risk, the risk rating *after all controls have been applied*, means that the mitigations in place are insufficient to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. The route must be changed, the activity modified, or the journey cancelled. There is no circumstance in which a leader should take a group into a situation where the residual risk is rated Extreme.

This distinction between initial risk and residual risk is critical. A hazard may initially rate as Extreme, a river crossing in flood, for example, but with the right controls (rerouting to a bridge, a firm no-cross threshold in the weather plan, a trained leader with rescue capability at the crossing point) the residual risk may reduce to High or Medium. That is the purpose of controls: to move the risk profile down the matrix to an acceptable level.

Identified Hazards and Risk Assessment

Task	Hazard	Pre-Mitigation	Mitigation Steps	Equipment	Post-Mitigation	Person Responsible
Pre-Activity Briefing and Equipment Check	Participants unaware of water safety procedures	HIGH Possible - Major	Conduct comprehensive water safety briefing covering paddling techniques, capsize procedures, swimming ability requirements, and emergency signals. Ensure all participants understand safety protocols.	Safety briefing materials, emergency procedures, communication devices	MEDIUM Unlikely - Moderate	Qualified Water Activity Leader
	Damaged or faulty watercraft and equipment	HIGH Possible - Major	Inspect all canoes/kayaks, paddles, and PFDs before use. Check for cracks, leaks, or damage. Remove damaged equipment from service. Maintain equipment log.	Equipment inspection checklist, spare equipment, repair kit	MEDIUM Unlikely - Moderate	Qualified Water Activity Leader
	Weather conditions unsuitable for water activities	HIGH Possible - Major	Check weather forecast before activity. Monitor conditions throughout session. Establish weather cancellation criteria (wind speed, lightning, storms). Have evacuation plan ready.	Weather monitoring equipment, communication devices	MEDIUM Unlikely - Moderate	Activity Leader
Fitting Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs)	Improperly fitted PFD not providing adequate flotation	HIGH Possible - Catastrophic	Leader to check each participant's PFD fit. Ensure all straps properly fastened and tightened. PFDs must be appropriate size for participant. Conduct PFD checks before entering water.	Properly sized and certified PFDs for all participants	MEDIUM Unlikely - Major	Qualified Water Activity Leader

Example Risk Assessment (Partial)

Applying Controls, the Hierarchy

Not all controls are equal. A control that physically prevents harm is more reliable than one that depends on a participant remembering to act correctly. The **Hierarchy of Controls** ranks control types from most to least effective, and a good risk assessment works down the hierarchy, using the highest-ranked effective control available for each hazard, not just the easiest one to document.

Level 1, Eliminate: Remove the hazard entirely. Change the route to avoid the dangerous creek crossing. Move the activity away from the cliff edge. This is the most effective control because it means the hazard no longer exists for your group. Always ask: *can we simply not encounter this hazard?*

Level 2, Substitute: Replace the hazardous element with a less hazardous one. Choose a lower-grade river crossing instead of the technical one. Use a fire trail instead of the exposed ridge in high wind. The hazard still exists, but its consequence or likelihood is reduced by the substitution.

Level 3, Engineering controls: Physical barriers, equipment, or structural measures that reduce exposure to the hazard. Fixed ropes at exposed sections. Personal flotation devices at water crossings. Shelter erected before a storm arrives. These controls work whether or not participants are paying attention.

Level 4, Administrative controls: Rules, procedures, briefings, supervision, and training. A mandatory rest stop before a technical section. A no-go threshold for river height. A requirement that all participants stay within sight of the Journey Leader on exposed terrain. These controls are only as effective as compliance allows, they depend on participants and leaders behaving correctly.

Level 5, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment): Helmets, harnesses, gloves, sun protection, rain gear. PPE does not prevent exposure to the hazard, it reduces the severity of harm if the hazard is encountered. It is the last line of defence, not the first.

A robust risk assessment uses multiple levels of the hierarchy for high and extreme initial risks. Relying solely on Level 4 and Level 5 controls for a serious hazard is a warning sign that the risk has not been adequately managed.

Hierarchy of Controls Pyramid

Authoring a Risk Assessment, Step by Step

Step 1, Identify all significant hazards. Walk the route in your mind from start to finish. Consider the environment (terrain, water, weather, wildlife, sun), the activities (walking, camping, cooking, navigation), the participants (fitness, age, experience, medical conditions), and the logistics (transport, equipment, communications). For each hazard, write a specific, descriptive statement, not "water" but "fast-moving creek crossing."

Step 2, Assess the initial risk. For each hazard, assign a Likelihood rating (A–E) and a Consequence rating (1–5) based on the conditions of your specific journey, before any controls are considered. Record the resulting risk rating from the matrix.

Step 3, Define controls. For each hazard, work down the Hierarchy of Controls and identify the most effective practicable controls. Write each control as a specific, verifiable action, not a vague intention. Assign a responsible person and, where relevant, a timing.

Step 4, Assess the residual risk. With controls in place, reassign the Likelihood and Consequence ratings. The residual risk rating must be lower than the initial rating for the controls to be meaningful. If the residual rating is still Extreme, the activity cannot proceed. If it is High, additional controls must be sought and mentor approval obtained.

Step 5: Review with mentor and guide. The risk assessment is a working document. The mentor's role in reviewing it is to challenge assumptions, identify hazards that were missed, and test whether the controls are genuinely effective. Welcome that challenge. It is the final line of defence before the activity begins.

Step 6, Brief the group. Every participant who will be on the journey should understand the key hazards and the controls that apply to them. A risk assessment that exists only in a folder and was never communicated to the group has failed its most important purpose.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Assess residual risk honestly. A risk assessment where every hazard ends up Low after controls is not thorough, it is optimistic. Approvers and mentors should challenge any residual risk reduction that seems implausible.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Use the hierarchy of controls deliberately. If your only controls for a serious hazard are briefings and PPE, ask yourself whether you have truly managed the risk or simply documented it.

> **PITFALL** Assessing residual risk as the same as initial risk, or failing to reassess at all. The entire purpose of controls is to reduce the risk profile. If the residual rating has not moved, the controls are either inadequate or not genuinely applied.

> **PITFALL** Generic controls such as 'take care', 'be aware', or 'exercise caution' are not auditable and will fail under scrutiny. Every control must answer the question: how would I verify that this was done?

Key Components Summary

Component	What It Is	What Good Looks Like
Hazard	A source of potential harm	Specific and descriptive, names the hazard, its location, and the conditions that make it relevant
Initial Risk	Likelihood × Consequence before controls	Rated honestly using the 5×5 matrix, not minimised to make the document look clean
Controls	Measures to reduce likelihood or consequence	Observable, testable, assigned to a person, drawn from the highest practical level of the hierarchy
Residual Risk	Likelihood × Consequence after controls	Lower than initial risk; no higher than High for the activity to proceed; Extreme means stop
Monitoring	Ongoing checks that controls remain effective	Named person, named trigger, named action, not a generic "monitor throughout"

CHAPTER 6

Meal Planning – Fueling the Fire

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Calculating calorie and water needs for the activity level and conditions
- Building a meal plan that accounts for every participant's dietary needs
- Why emergency food is a planning element, not a verbal instruction

Typical time: 1–2 hours; longer for large groups or special diets

"As the sun dips low, bodies cry for nourishment. Proper fuelling turns fatigue into fire, sustaining the spirit through gruelling days."

Group around the campfire on a bush expedition. good food and good company, the reward for careful meal planning.

Why Meal Planning Matters More Than You Think

Food on a multi-day expedition is not a logistics afterthought. It is a safety variable. A group that is well-fed moves better, thinks more clearly, makes better decisions, and recovers faster overnight. A group that is under-fuelled, whether through insufficient calories, poor macronutrient balance, or mismanaged meal timing, fatigues earlier, becomes irritable and distracted, and is significantly more vulnerable to cold, injury, and poor judgement.

The meal plan is where the Journey Leader translates the physical demands of the route into a nutritional strategy. A strenuous 18km day with 900m of ascent requires a fundamentally different food profile than a rest day at base camp. A hot summer expedition demands a different hydration and electrolyte plan than a cold-weather winter journey. These are not details to be sorted informally on the day. They need to be worked out in advance, written down, and approved.

There is also a duty of care dimension. When you are responsible for a group in a remote environment, their nutritional wellbeing is part of your responsibility as a leader. Dietary restrictions and food allergies must be identified before departure, not discovered at dinnertime on Day 1. For youth participants especially, inadequate nutrition can affect behaviour, mood, and safety in ways that are difficult to manage at distance from medical support.

Finally, a good meal plan manages waste, weight, and logistics. Food that is poorly portioned creates unnecessary pack weight on Day 1 and unnecessary rubbish on Day 3. Food that requires elaborate preparation creates frustration when participants are cold and tired. Thinking through meals in advance, what is carried, how it is prepared, how waste is managed, is the difference between a campfire that feels like a reward and one that feels like a chore.

How to Create a Meal Plan

Start with the group profile: how many people, how many days, and what is the physical intensity of each day? Then build the meal plan from those parameters outward, not from a list of favourite foods inward.

> *'There are two types of Journey Leaders: those who have conducted a pre-departure food check and found a Cub's entire three-day supply consisting of a family-sized bag of chips and a Freddo, and those who haven't done it yet.'*

Calorie requirements for active days in the bush are substantially higher than sedentary daily needs. As a practical guide:

- Moderate activity (8–12km, moderate terrain): 2,500–3,000 kcal per person per day
- High activity (12–18km, variable terrain, significant elevation): 3,000–3,500 kcal per person per day
- Very high activity (18km+, technical terrain, or cold weather): 3,500–4,500 kcal per person per day

These are starting estimates. Adjust for body size, age, cold exposure (which significantly increases calorie burn), and individual metabolic rates.

Macronutrient balance matters as much as total calories. Carbohydrates are the primary fuel for sustained aerobic effort, they should form the majority of energy intake, particularly in meals before and during high-exertion legs. Protein supports muscle repair and recovery overnight, prioritise it in evening meals. Fat is calorie-dense (9 kcal per gram versus 4 kcal for carbohydrates and protein), slow-digesting, and highly effective for warmth and satiety on cold nights.

Meal structure for a typical active day:

- **Breakfast:** High-carbohydrate, easy to prepare, eaten before significant physical effort. Porridge with nuts and dried fruit, or muesli with milk powder, are reliable bush staples. Allow 30–45 minutes for eating and packing before walking.
- **Lunch:** Mostly no-cook for efficiency, crackers, hard cheese, salami, nut butter, dried fruit, chocolate. Eaten in legs, not as one stop, to maintain blood sugar and momentum.
- **Snacks:** Critical on high-exertion days. Nuts, muesli bars, dried fruit, and jerky at regular intervals (every 60–90 minutes of walking) prevent energy crashes and reduce the risk of participants becoming hypoglycaemic.
- **Dinner:** The restorative meal. Hot, substantial, and high in protein for overnight recovery. Pasta, rice, or dehydrated meal bases work well. Allow enough cooking fuel and time, a rushed, cold dinner is a morale problem as well as a nutritional one.

Dietary restrictions and allergies must be recorded for every participant before the meal plan is finalised. Common issues include nut allergies (which eliminates many bush food staples and requires careful substitution), gluten intolerance, lactose intolerance, vegetarian and vegan diets, and religious dietary requirements. For each restriction, confirm that every meal either meets the restriction or has a clearly identified alternative, not a vague plan to "sort something out."

Weight and pack management: Food weight is a real constraint. A rough rule of thumb is 500–700g of food per person per day for lightweight bush travel. Dehydrated and freeze-dried foods offer the best calorie-to-weight ratio. Remove excess packaging before departure to reduce pack weight and waste. Distribute group food items across multiple packs to avoid any single pack failure becoming a food loss event.

How to Create a Water Plan

Water is the most critical consumable on any expedition, more urgent than food, and harder to improvise. A water plan starts during route planning, not meal planning: identify every reliable water source on the route and mark the distance between them. Calculate daily requirements per person (3–4L minimum for moderate activity; 5–6L in heat or high exertion) and confirm your group's carry capacity covers the longest gap between sources.

Purification method must be decided in advance and matched to the terrain. Running highland streams may be suitable for filtration; slow or low-lying water may require chemical treatment or boiling. Carry at least one backup method. Document your primary and contingency sources for each leg, and have a clear plan for what the group does if a marked source is dry, inaccessible, or contaminated.

Component	Description
Source Identification	Water sources marked on the route map for every leg. Distance between sources assessed against carry capacity.
Daily Requirements	Minimum 3–4L per person per day for moderate activity; increase for heat, high exertion, or young participants.
Purification Method	Primary method confirmed (filter, chemical treatment, or boiling). Backup method carried.
Carry Capacity	Group's total water carrying capacity confirmed sufficient for the longest dry stretch on the route.
Contingency	Clear plan documented for each leg if a planned source is dry, inaccessible, or unsafe.

The Emergency Meal Allocation, Always One Day Extra

Your risk assessment will have identified scenarios that could cause the group to be delayed or unable to exit on schedule, injury requiring slow movement, unexpected weather that forces a layover, a navigation error that adds a day, a participant medical episode, or a flooded exit route. These are not theoretical edge cases. They are real, documented causes of multi-day overstay in the Australian bush, and the risk assessment should reflect them.

The meal plan must respond to that risk. Every journey, regardless of duration or difficulty, must include a full emergency food allocation for one additional day beyond the planned itinerary, for every member of the group. This is not a buffer or a nice-to-have, it is the nutritional equivalent of carrying a PLB. The emergency food should be clearly identified in the meal plan, kept separate from the daily food supply, and only opened if the group is genuinely delayed beyond their planned exit day.

Emergency food should be calorie-dense, lightweight, and require no cooking or minimal preparation: high-energy bars, nuts, dried fruit, jerky, and instant sachets if a stove is available. It does not need to be exciting. It needs to sustain the group through an unplanned day while decisions are made and, if necessary, rescue is activated.

Failure to carry emergency food is a planning failure, not a field decision. The field is not where this gets sorted.

Why You Should Resist the Urge to Let Participants Self-Cater

Self-catering, where each participant or family is responsible for providing their own food, is common in youth outdoor activities, particularly Scouts and similar organisations. It is popular for obvious reasons: it reduces the administrative burden on the Journey Leader, eliminates the need to manage food allergies centrally, and feels like a natural extension of participant responsibility and independence.

It is, however, a shortcut that the Journey Leader cannot fully take. Here is why.

When participants self-cater, the Journey Leader has not been relieved of responsibility for their nutritional adequacy, they have simply moved the task out of sight. If a participant arrives at the trailhead with food that is insufficient, nutritionally inadequate, or incompatible with the physical demands of the journey, the Journey Leader is responsible for managing that situation in the field, with limited options and no easy fixes.

This is not hypothetical. Journey Leaders regularly discover, on Day 1, when it is too late, that participants have brought far too little food, brought entirely the wrong kinds of food, or brought food that is unusable in the conditions. A Scout on a three-day hike who arrives with nothing but beef jerky for every meal is not an extreme outlier. It is a predictable outcome of a system where the Journey Leader has abdicated the meal planning responsibility without genuinely transferring it.

The practical reality is this: if the Journey Leader intends to allow self-catering, they must still validate every individual's food supply before departure, checking quantity, calorie content, dietary adequacy, and compatibility with the conditions. That validation takes nearly as much effort as writing a single group meal plan, and it produces a worse outcome: variable nutrition, uneven pack weights, no shared group food pool, and no coordinated emergency allocation.

A single shared group meal plan, where the Journey Leader specifies all meals and food is purchased, prepared, and distributed collectively, is more efficient, more equitable, nutritionally superior, and logistically simpler in the field.
It is also the only approach that genuinely ensures every participant is adequately fuelled for every day of the journey.

If self-catering is used, for legitimate reasons such as dietary complexity, organisational policy, or participant development objectives, the Journey Leader must still conduct a pre-departure food check for every participant, verify that each person's supply meets the daily calorie and nutritional requirements for the planned activity level, and confirm that each participant is carrying their share of the emergency food allocation.

Steps to Complete

- Set number of attendees and planned days, then add one additional day to the plan as the emergency food allocation.

- Generate day rows for all planned days, then complete meal type, menu item, quantity, and notes for each entry.
- Add the emergency day as a clearly labelled separate section, with calorie-dense, low-prep items.
- Check summary totals and total servings for realism and adequacy against the activity level.
- If self-catering is used, document the pre-departure food check process and who is responsible for conducting it.
- Complete the Water Plan: identify sources per route leg, calculate daily requirements, confirm purification method and carry capacity, document contingencies.
- Submit meal and water plans for approval once complete.

STRONG PRACTICE Always include one full emergency day of food per person, over and above the planned itinerary. Keep it separate, keep it labelled, and brief the group on when it may be used.

STRONG PRACTICE Add allergy-safe alternatives in notes and verify total energy intake against the planned activity level for each day.

STRONG PRACTICE Plan a single shared group meal rather than allowing self-catering. It produces better nutrition, simpler logistics, and genuine oversight of every participant's food supply.

STRONG PRACTICE Treat the water plan as a route constraint, not an afterthought. Map sources before you finalise legs, and verify carry capacity before you finalise the route.

PITFALL Allowing self-catering without conducting a pre-departure food check for every participant. Delegating the task is not the same as the task being done. A participant with inadequate food on Day 1 is a safety problem for the whole group.

PITFALL Treating the emergency food allocation as optional or leaving it to participants to "bring something extra." It must be planned, specified, and verified before departure, not improvised.

PITFALL Assuming water sources shown on maps will be reliable. Seasonal variation, drought, and livestock contamination can make marked sources unusable. Always have a contingency for each leg.

CHAPTER 7

Transport Planning – The Journey's Carriage

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Documenting every movement leg with named drivers and confirmed vehicles
- Assigning passengers before departure day, not at the assembly point
- Building contingencies for delays and breakdowns

Typical time: 1 hour once drivers are confirmed

"From the trailhead to the heart of the wild, your steed must be reliable. Planning is the rein that guides safely."

Loading up at the trailhead. confirmed vehicles, confirmed drivers, confirmed passengers.

Why Transport Planning Matters

Transport is the most dangerous part of most adventurous activities. Statistically, the greatest risk of serious injury or death on a youth expedition in Australia is not on the trail - it is on the road getting there and back. Confirming who is driving, who is in which vehicle, and what happens if something goes wrong is not administration. It is the first safety document of the journey.

Transport planning also shapes the entire logistics of the day. The time the group leaves determines when they arrive at the trailhead, which determines when they start walking, which determines whether they reach camp before dark. A late departure caused by a driver who wasn't confirmed, a vehicle that won't fit the gear, or an assembly point no one communicated clearly can compress the first day to the point where it becomes unsafe. These failures are entirely preventable.

> *'Transport planning in Scouts operates on a spectrum. At one end: a detailed document with named drivers, confirmed vehicles, and passenger lists. At the other end: a WhatsApp message at 7pm the night before asking who has a seven-seater. This chapter is about the first end.'*

What a Transport Plan Covers

The focus for activities is practical coordination: the right people in the right vehicles, everyone briefed, contingency planned. This is not a commercial vehicle compliance audit. It is a confirmed, written plan that answers the questions that matter when something goes wrong.

Drivers should be named specifically, not "TBC." Each driver needs to have agreed to the role before the plan is submitted. Their name and a contact number are the only details required.

Vehicles should be appropriate for the group and the terrain. Does every passenger have a seat with a seatbelt? Is there room for all packs? Is the vehicle suitable for the road to the start, sealed, fire trail, 4WD required? These are the checks that matter, not licence classes or insurance schedules.

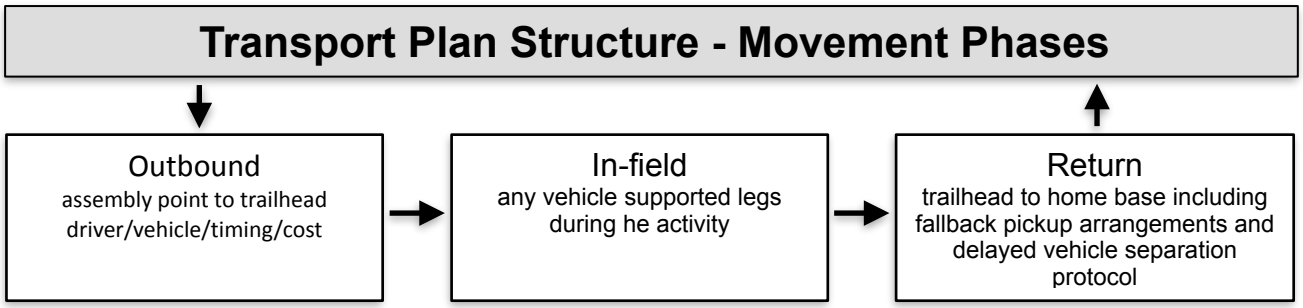
Passenger allocation should be documented before departure day, not sorted at the assembly point. If a vehicle is late or breaks down, the Journey Leader needs to know immediately who is missing and where they should be.

Movement phases should be broken into distinct legs:

- *Outbound:* assembly point, departure time, trailhead destination, expected arrival, parking location and grid reference.
- *In-field:* any vehicle movement during the activity - car shuffle for a point-to-point route, support vehicle meeting the group.
- *Return:* exit point departure time, estimated arrival back at base, who notifies families on safe return.

Breakdown and delay contingency must be explicit. What happens if a vehicle breaks down on the way to the trailhead? What if the group is delayed on-trail and misses the pickup window? Who does the driver call, and what is the waiting protocol?

Meeting point if separated - every vehicle should know where to go if contact is lost. A trailhead car park is usually the obvious answer, but it needs to be written down.



STRONG PRACTICE Brief every driver on the plan before departure day - route, timing, what to do if there's a breakdown, and who to call. A driver who has read the plan in advance handles problems far better than one reading it in a car park at 6am.

STRONG PRACTICE Nominate a base contact who receives a message when the group safely returns to vehicles. They should have the transport plan and know the trigger time - what to do if that message doesn't arrive.

PITFALL Leaving passenger allocation and driver briefing until the assembly point. By then there is no time to resolve problems: a vehicle that won't fit all the gear, a driver who doesn't know the route, or a participant who wasn't picked up.

PITFALL Vague contingency plans. "We'll work it out" is not a breakdown plan. Name the person to call, the waiting point, and the fallback if the repair takes too long.

CHAPTER 8

Budgeting – Counting the Coins

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Researching real costs - not estimates from memory or last year
- Applying contingency correctly and communicating the per-person figure
- Why budget optimism is a form of planning failure

Typical time: 1–2 hours; check current prices for every line item

"Every great quest has its treasury. Meticulous budgeting ensures the adventure doesn't end in financial ruins."

Planning session with maps and gear. every cost starts with knowing what you need.

Why the Budget is a Planning Document, Not a Formality

The budget is one of the most underestimated planning documents in outdoor education. Leaders who focus heavily on the route, the risk assessment, and the logistics often treat the budget as an administrative necessity, something to fill in to satisfy the approval process. That approach creates two problems that reliably surface at the worst possible time.

The first is financial risk. Expeditions that are under-costed leave leaders scrambling to cover gaps with personal funds, asking families for additional contributions at short notice, or making cost-driven decisions in the field, choosing the shorter, riskier route to save fuel, or skipping the campsite with facilities to avoid the fee. None of these are safe outcomes. A well-constructed budget eliminates financial uncertainty before it can influence safety decisions.

The second is a transparency and trust problem. Families and participants who contribute to journey costs deserve to know what their money is paying for. A budget that has been properly researched and documented demonstrates that the Journey Leader has been responsible with the funds entrusted to them. It also protects the Journey Leader and the organisation if costs are later questioned.

Beyond risk management, the budget is a planning constraint that shapes the journey itself. The route you can plan is partly determined by what you can afford. The meals you can provide are limited by the food budget. The transport approach is constrained by vehicle and fuel costs. Planning the budget early, not as the last step, means these constraints are known before other decisions are locked in, not discovered after.

What Belongs in a Journey Budget

A complete budget accounts for every cost associated with the journey, divided into categories that make it easy to review, approve, and track. The main cost categories for a multi-day expedition are:

Transport is typically the largest single cost category. Include fuel (calculated from distance and vehicle consumption rates), vehicle hire if applicable, parking fees at trailheads, road tolls, and any public transport or charter bus costs. If private vehicles are used, a per-kilometre reimbursement rate should be agreed in advance and applied consistently.

Catering covers all food and consumables: the full meal plan, cooking fuel (gas canisters or solid fuel), and any pre-trip or post-trip meals if the group assembles and departs as a whole. Cost this at the ingredient level, not as a rough per-day estimate, it takes more time but produces a far more accurate figure.

Permits and access fees are often overlooked or underestimated. National park entry fees, camping fees, hut fees, and track access charges can add substantially to the per-person cost, particularly for multi-day routes through multiple parks or reserves. Research these in advance at the specific rates for your dates and group size.

Gear hire and equipment covers any items that are rented rather than owned: canoes, harnesses, specialist shelter, satellite communicators. Include consumables such as batteries, water purification chemicals, and first aid restocking.

Communications and emergency covers the cost of hiring or maintaining a PLB, satellite communicator subscription, or emergency communication device for the duration of the journey.

Other costs include anything that does not fit neatly elsewhere: entry fees for activities, interpretive guide fees, photography, post-trip printing of journals or certificates.

Contingency is not optional. A contingency of 10–20% of the total estimated cost should be applied to every budget. The contingency exists to absorb legitimate cost variations, fuel prices that have moved since the budget was written, a permit fee that was higher than expected, an emergency resupply of a consumable. It is not a slush fund, and it should not be used to cover costs that were simply forgotten. If the contingency is unspent, it is returned to contributors.

Costing Accurately

The most common budgeting failure is estimating costs from memory or assumption rather than from research. Every line item in a budget should be based on a real figure: a quote, a published fee schedule, a current price from a supplier, or an actual measurement (distance driven, weight of food purchased).

Per-person costs are calculated by dividing the total cost of each category by the number of participants. This is the figure that families and participants see and pay. Make sure it is clearly documented how the per-person cost was calculated, and whether leader costs are included in or excluded from the per-person figure.

Fixed versus variable costs behave differently as group size changes. Fixed costs (a single permit fee, a campsite booking) stay the same regardless of how many people attend, so the per-person cost decreases as group size increases. Variable costs (food, fuel calculated per person) scale directly with group size. Understanding this distinction is important when group numbers change close to departure, it affects the per-person cost and the total required.

Budget Key Components

Component	Description
Attendees & Contingency	Defines scale and buffers unexpected cost variations. Set contingency at 10–20% of total.
Cost Rows	Every cost itemised by category: transport, catering, permits, gear hire, comms, other.
Fixed vs Variable	Fixed costs noted separately from variable, affects per-person calculation when numbers change.
Per-Person Total	Total cost divided by number of participants. The figure communicated to families.
Actuals Tracking	Post-trip: actual costs recorded against budgeted amounts. Variance explained and surplus returned.

Steps to Complete

- Identify all cost categories relevant to the journey before estimating any individual line item.

- Research real costs, quotes, fee schedules, measured distances, for every line item. Do not estimate from memory.
- Separate fixed costs from variable costs and calculate each appropriately.
- Apply contingency of 10–20% to the total.
- Calculate and document the per-person contribution clearly.
- Verify the total against available budget or expected family contributions before committing to the plan.
- Submit for mentor approval with all cost sources documented.
- After the journey, record actuals against budget and return any surplus to contributors.

STRONG PRACTICE Agree on a reimbursement process for leaders using personal vehicles before departure, not after. Apply a consistent rate per kilometre and document it in the budget.

STRONG PRACTICE Research every cost line from a real source before writing it into the budget. A budget built on assumptions is a budget that will surprise you in the field.

PITFALL Treating contingency as a rounding error rather than a deliberate buffer. A 5% contingency on a tight budget provides almost no protection. Set it at 10–20% and defend it during approval.

PITFALL Forgetting permit and access fees until close to departure, when they can no longer be absorbed without asking families for more money. Research all permit costs as part of the initial budget draft.

CHAPTER 9

Activity Plan – Designing the Day

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Documenting supervision ratios, participant roles, and scheduled activities
- Building the field emergency procedures into the activity plan
- How the activity plan connects to the risk assessment

Typical time: 1–2 hours

"A journey without structure is just wandering. The activity plan is what turns movement through terrain into a purposeful, led experience."

What an Activity Plan Is

The activity plan is the operational document for the journey itself. Where the route plan describes where the group will go and the risk assessment describes what could go wrong, the activity plan describes how the journey will be led from the inside: how the group will be managed, what each day is intended to achieve, what the supervision structure looks like, how decisions will be made in the field, and what happens if something does not go to plan.

For straightforward journeys with experienced participants, the activity plan may be relatively brief. For complex journeys with youth participants, mixed fitness levels, or technically demanding terrain, it needs considerably more detail. The test is simple: if a qualified person who had not been involved in the planning read the activity plan, would they have a clear picture of how the journey would be led and what the key leadership decisions would be? If the answer is yes, the plan is adequate. If the answer is no, it needs more work.

The activity plan also serves a consent and briefing purpose. It is the document from which participant briefings are drawn, and it should contain enough detail for participants and their families to genuinely understand what the activity involves: not just the route and the duration, but the physical demands, the supervision approach, the daily structure, and the plan for managing the group if conditions change.

What an Activity Plan Must Cover

Purpose and learning objectives. Every journey should have a clear purpose beyond the logistics: what the participants are expected to gain from it, what skills or experiences it is designed to develop, and how it fits into a broader programme. These objectives shape every other decision in the plan and provide the standard against which the debrief will assess success.

Participant profile. A summary of the group: numbers, age range, relevant experience, fitness level, and any individual factors that affect leadership decisions, such as medical conditions, first-time participants, or participants who have previously struggled with similar activities. The activity plan should reflect an honest assessment of the group's capability, not a flattering one.

Supervision structure. For every leg of the journey, the plan should document: the leader-to-participant ratio, the positioning of supervising adults (lead, sweep, or both), and the protocol for keeping the group together or managing separation. In youth activities especially, the supervision structure is the primary control against a wide range of hazards, and it must be explicit.

Daily structure. A day-by-day outline of how each day will be structured: departure time, planned stops, activity focus for each leg, meal timing, camp arrival target, and any specific activities or learning moments built into the day. This is not a rigid minute-by-minute schedule, but it should be detailed enough that the Journey Leader and participants share a clear picture of the day.

Decision points and contingencies. For each day, identify the key decision points where the plan might need to change: the turnaround trigger if the group is behind schedule, the alternative campsite if the planned site is unavailable, the route modification if conditions deteriorate.

Group management approach. How will the group be managed during the walking legs: buddy systems, group intervals, procedures for rest stops, protocols for river crossings or technical sections. For youth groups, this section should be specific about how participants are expected to behave and what the Journey Leader's response will be if they do not.

Field emergency procedures. A summary of the emergency response plan tailored to the specific journey: who holds the first aid kit, who carries the PLB, the communications protocol for each leg, and the evacuation options from each major section of the route. This should be consistent with the risk assessment and with the emergency procedures chapter.

Key Components

Component	What Good Looks Like
Purpose and Objectives	Specific to this journey and this group, not generic. Linked to the broader programme.
Participant Profile	Honest assessment of capability, experience, and individual factors. No flattering generalisations.
Supervision Structure	Ratios and adult positioning documented for every leg. Protocol for separation or incidents.
Daily Structure	Day-by-day outline with departure time, stops, meal timing, and camp arrival target.
Decision Points	Turnaround triggers, alternative routes, and contingency campsites identified in advance.
Group Management	Specific protocols for the activity type, terrain, and participant age and experience.
Field Emergency Procedures	Operationally specific: who holds what, communications by leg, evacuation options by section.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Use the activity plan as the source document for participant and family briefings. If something is in the briefing, it should be in the plan. If it is not in the plan, it should not be in the briefing.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Review the activity plan alongside the risk assessment. Every high-level risk should have a corresponding leadership response in the activity plan. If a risk says "creek crossing requires individual supervision," the activity plan should describe how that supervision is structured.

> **PITFALL** Writing the activity plan after the other documents are finalised. The activity plan should inform the risk assessment and the route plan, not be derived from them. The supervision structure and field decision points are inputs to hazard assessment, not outputs.

CHAPTER 10

Consent – Informed Agreement to Participate

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- What genuine informed consent requires - beyond a signature
- Timing consent so families have read it before they sign it
- Consent for youth members vs adult participants

Typical time: Allow 1–2 weeks for forms to be returned

"Consent is not a signature on a form. It is the evidence that participants and their families understood what they agreed to."

What Consent Means in an Adventurous Activity Context

Consent in adventurous activities serves two purposes. The first is legal and organisational: obtaining documented agreement from a parent or guardian (for youth participants) or from the participant directly (for adults) that they understand and accept the nature of the activity. The second, and more important, is ethical: ensuring that the people who are accepting risk on behalf of themselves or their children have genuinely been given the information they need to make an informed decision.

The ethical dimension is where most consent processes fall short. A form that lists the activity dates and asks for a signature does not constitute informed consent. Informed consent requires that the person signing understands, in terms they can actually process, what the activity involves: the terrain and physical demands, the key risks and how they are being managed, the supervision arrangements, the emergency procedures, and what to do if they have concerns or want to withdraw. A parent who signed a form they did not read, because forms are routinely sent and routinely signed without scrutiny, has not given meaningful consent.

The Journey Leader's responsibility is to design a consent process that closes that gap. This means providing information in a clear, readable format before the consent is sought, being available to answer questions, and not proceeding with participants whose consent documents are incomplete, out of date, or whose guardians have expressed unresolved concerns.

> *'The most common consent failure is a Scout handing the form to their parent on Thursday evening for a Saturday departure. The parent signs without reading it, the Journey Leader assumes everything is fine, and nobody has actually had the conversation that consent is supposed to document. Timing matters as much as format.'*

Consent for Youth Participants

For participants under 18, consent must be obtained from a parent or legal guardian. The consent document should include:

Activity description. The type of activity, the dates, the location, and the general nature of the terrain. Not so technical that it is unreadable, but specific enough that the parent can form a genuine picture of what their child will be doing.

Physical demands. An honest description of the fitness and effort required: approximate daily distances, elevation, pack weight, sleeping conditions, and any technically demanding sections. Parents cannot consent meaningfully to physical demands they do not understand.

Key risks. A plain-language summary of the main risks associated with the activity and how they are being managed. Not the full risk assessment, but the substance of it. Parents should understand that the Journey Leader has assessed the risks and what the key controls are.

Medical and dietary information. A request for disclosure of any medical conditions, medications, allergies, or dietary requirements that the Journey Leader needs to know. This information is essential for both the meal plan and the risk assessment, and it must be current.

Supervision and emergency arrangements. Who will be supervising the group, what the adult-to-participant ratio is, how emergency contact will be made if something happens, and what the procedure is for a participant who needs to leave the activity.

Withdrawal. A clear statement that the parent or participant can withdraw consent before or during the activity, and the process for doing so.

Consent for Adult Participants

Adults consent for themselves. The standard of information required is the same: they need to understand the activity, the demands, the risks, and the supervision arrangements. The process is typically less formal than for youth participants, but the substance should not be reduced. An adult participant who does not know what they have agreed to is as much a risk management problem as a youth participant with an uninformed parent.

For adult participants with authority over their own decisions, the consent process also provides an opportunity to confirm that they understand their responsibilities within the group: the code of conduct expected, the authority of the Journey Leader in field decisions, and the obligation to disclose relevant medical information.

Keeping Consent Records

Consent documents must be retained as part of the journey records, not destroyed after the activity. In the event of an incident, the consent documentation may be relevant to insurance claims, regulatory investigations, or legal proceedings. The records should include the signed consent form, the date it was received, and any follow-up correspondence with parents or participants who asked questions.

Consent obtained for a previous activity does not carry over. Each activity requires fresh consent, because the activity is different, the risks are different, and the participant's circumstances may have changed.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Follow up personally with any family that has not returned consent by the agreed date. Do not assume that no response means they are fine with it.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Send consent information early enough that parents have time to read it, ask questions, and return it before any planning assumptions about participant numbers are locked in. A consent form sent three days before departure is not a genuine consent process.

> **PITFALL** Treating the consent form as a liability waiver. Consent is not a mechanism for transferring responsibility away from the organisation. It is a mechanism for ensuring participants have the information they need to make an informed decision. The two are entirely different things.

> **PITFALL** Using the same consent form for multiple activities across a season without updating the activity-specific information. A form that describes last year's journey is not consent for this year's journey.

CHAPTER 11

Trip Intention & External Requirements

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Lodging trip intention with NPWS and storing the confirmation evidence
- Understanding which external notifications are mandatory for your journey type
- How to brief emergency contacts so they know what to do

Typical time: Complete at T-14 to T-10 days

"In the vast wilderness, you're never truly alone. Lodging intentions is like sending ravens, ensuring help arrives if shadows lengthen."

Why Trip Intention Is Not Optional

Lodging a trip intention is the act that completes the connection between your group and the outside world. It is the document that tells the people who would search for you where to look, when to start looking, and who to contact. Without it, a delayed or overdue group may not be missed for days, and when they are, rescuers have nothing to work from except what someone remembers being told.

In Australia, the consequences of not lodging a trip intention are well documented. Search-and-rescue operations in remote areas regularly begin later than they should, cover the wrong ground, or face avoidable complexity because no formal intention was lodged and the group's route was not precisely known. Time lost in the early hours of a search has direct consequences for outcomes, particularly for medical emergencies or exposure situations.

The fifteen minutes it takes to lodge a trip intention is among the most high-value time spent in the entire planning process. It is the practical safety mechanism that connects your group to external rescue services if something goes wrong, and it should be treated with the same seriousness as the risk assessment and the route plan. In an emergency, it may be the most important document associated with the journey.

Beyond the safety case, lodging a trip intention is also a legal and organisational requirement for most youth and outdoor education activities in Australia. Scouting, Duke of Edinburgh, and most formal outdoor education frameworks require evidence that a trip intention has been lodged with the relevant authority before an activity proceeds. Failing to do so is not just a safety risk, it is a compliance failure that exposes the Journey Leader and the organisation.

What a Trip Intention Covers

The trip intention provides external authorities, most commonly the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) or equivalent land manager, with the information they need to mount an effective search if the group does not return as planned. It should be submitted via the relevant authority's online form or app, and the confirmation evidence (email, reference number, or screenshot) must be retained as part of the journey records.

The key information required includes:

Route details: Start and end points with grid references, planned campsites or overnight locations, the intended route between them, and any known alternates. The more precise this information, the smaller the initial search area if the group is overdue.

Dates and times: Departure date and time, expected return date and time, and, critically, the latest possible return time after which the group should be considered overdue and rescue services contacted. This is not the same as the expected return time. It is the trigger point, and it must be specific.

Group details: Number of people in the group, names of the Journey Leader and at least one other responsible adult, experience level of the group, any medical conditions relevant to a rescue scenario (mobility limitations, conditions requiring medication).

Emergency contacts: At minimum two contacts who are not in the field with the group, who have a copy of the trip plan, and who know exactly what to do and who to call if the group does not return by the trigger time. Emergency contacts must be briefed before departure, not simply listed on a form they have never seen.

Vehicle details: Make, model, colour, and registration of every vehicle left at the trailhead. This allows search teams to confirm whether the group has exited safely by checking whether vehicles have been collected. If vehicles are parked in a remote or unfamiliar location, include the grid reference of the carpark.

Communication equipment: Any PLBs or EPIRBs registered to group members (with registration numbers), satellite communicators, and the number and type of mobile phones carried. Note that mobile coverage cannot be assumed, the trip intention is the backup for when communications fail.

The Emergency Contact's Role

The emergency contact is not a passive recipient of the form, they are an active participant in the safety plan. Before departure, the Journey Leader must brief every nominated emergency contact on the trip details and planned route, the expected and trigger return times, the exact steps to take if the trigger time passes without contact, and where to find a copy of the full trip plan. An emergency contact who has simply been added to a form without being briefed is not a safety mechanism, they are a name on a page.

Steps to Complete

- Set a specific trigger time, the latest acceptable return time after which emergency contacts must act.
- Brief all nominated emergency contacts personally on the plan, trigger time, and their actions.
- Store confirmation evidence (email, reference number, or screenshot) in your journey records.
- Ensure the emergency contacts have a copy of the full trip plan, not just the intention form.
- Test all communication devices (PLB registration, satellite communicator, mobile coverage at trailhead) before departure.

> **PITFALL** Listing emergency contacts who have not been briefed and do not have a copy of the trip plan. In a real emergency, they will not know what to do or who to call.

> **PITFALL** Marking trip intention as complete in your planning records without retaining the confirmation evidence. If the authority's system has a technical issue or the submission was not received, you have no proof it was lodged.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Set the trigger time conservatively, it should account for a reasonable delay but not so much that the overdue window is dangerously long. For a day walk, two hours past expected return is a reasonable trigger. For a multi-day journey, the morning of the day after expected return.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Brief emergency contacts in a conversation, not just by forwarding the form. Confirm they understand what to do and that they will be available during the journey dates.

CHAPTER 12

Notifications – Closing the Communication Loop

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Who needs to be notified, when, and what they need to know
- The difference between notifying and briefing
- Keeping a record of notifications made

Typical time: Complete at T-7 days

"The people who need to know, need to know before you leave, not after something has gone wrong."

Why Notifications Are a Planning Task, Not an Afterthought

Notifications are the final act of responsible planning before departure. They are the process of ensuring that every person and organisation with a legitimate need to know about the journey has been informed, at a level of detail appropriate to their role, before the group leaves.

The practical case for notifications is straightforward. Families need to know when to expect their child or family member back, and who to contact if they have concerns. Organisation leadership needs to know that an activity is proceeding and that the planning meets the required standard. Land managers may need to be informed for permit, access, or environmental management reasons. Emergency services in some areas appreciate advance notice of groups in remote terrain, particularly in high-risk weather windows.

Done well, notifications also create a safety backstop. If an emergency contact triggers a rescue response, the relevant authorities will contact the organisation. If the organisation has been notified of the activity, they can provide immediate support. If they have not, the organisation hears about the incident the same way the public does, with no ability to assist and no understanding of what was planned.

Notifications are also a record of accountability. They document that responsible people outside the immediate planning team were informed and had the opportunity to raise concerns before the activity proceeded. That record matters if questions are asked later.

Who Needs to Be Notified

Families and participants. The most detailed notification goes to those who are directly involved. This is closely linked to the consent process: families should receive full activity information as part of consent, and a final confirmation of departure details, expected return time, and emergency contact information in the days before departure.

Organisation leadership. The relevant level of leadership within the organisation, whether that is a group leader, section head, or organisational safety officer, should be notified that the activity is proceeding and that the planning has been approved. The level of detail appropriate here is a summary: activity type, dates, location, group size, leader, and confirmation that mentor and guide approval has been obtained. This is the notification that activates organisational oversight and support.

Land managers. For activities in national parks, state forests, or other managed lands, the relevant authority may require notification or advance booking beyond the trip intention. Check the specific requirements for your area and dates. For high-traffic areas or sensitive environments, this may also involve conditions on group size, camping locations, or activity type.

Local emergency services. For remote, technically demanding, or extended activities, some organisations proactively notify the relevant police rescue or SES unit of the activity details. This is not universally required but is considered good practice for journeys where the consequences of delayed rescue response would be severe.

Other leaders or sections. Where the activity affects shared resources, facilities, or scheduling within the organisation, relevant colleagues should be informed. This is a courtesy and a coordination function, not a safety requirement, but it prevents conflicts and supports the broader organisation's planning.

What Good Notification Looks Like

A notification is not a one-line message saying the trip is going ahead. It is a purposeful communication tailored to the recipient's role and information needs, sent in time to allow them to raise questions or concerns before departure.

For families: full activity information through the consent process, followed by a pre-departure communication that confirms final details, meeting time, what to bring, expected return time, and the emergency contact number.

For organisation leadership: a brief summary with the key facts and confirmation that approval has been obtained. Enough to activate oversight, not so much that it becomes a document review.

For land managers: the information required by their specific process, submitted through their required channel, with confirmation evidence retained.

Notification records should be kept as part of the journey file: who was notified, when, and through what channel. This is the documentation that demonstrates the communication loop was genuinely closed.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Send the family pre-departure notification at least 48 hours before departure. It should confirm return time, emergency contact number, and the procedure if the return is delayed. Families should not need to call around to find out what is happening.

> **PITFALL** Treating notification of organisation leadership as optional for smaller or routine activities. Even routine activities go wrong. An organisation that was not informed of an activity cannot support the Journey Leader or the families when it does.

CHAPTER 13

Weather Planning – Heeding the Skies

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Setting specific go/no-go thresholds during planning, not at the trailhead
- Using BOM, Windy, and RFS as a cross-checked monitoring system
- Preparing offline weather tools for areas without mobile coverage

Typical time: Ongoing; final check T-24 hours

"The heavens are fickle storytellers. Integrating forecasts turns tempests into tales of triumph."

An approaching storm over the ranges. weather is Australia's most dynamic and dangerous wilderness hazard.

Why Weather is a Planning Variable, Not a Planning Risk

Weather is the single most dynamic variable in any Australian wilderness expedition. Unlike terrain, which is fixed, or group fitness, which changes slowly, weather can transform a manageable day into a dangerous one within hours. A route that is straightforward in mild conditions can become genuinely life-threatening in sustained rain, high wind, extreme heat, or electrical storm. The leaders who manage this well are not the ones who check the forecast the morning of departure, they are the ones who have been thinking about weather since the journey was first conceived.

The mistake most planning documents make is treating weather as a risk to be listed in the risk assessment and then monitored. That framing is incomplete. Weather is not simply a hazard column entry, it is an active input into every other planning decision. The route you plan must be evaluated against the realistic weather range for that area and season. The daily distances you schedule must account for the possibility of slower movement in rain, heat, or wind. The campsites you select must offer reasonable shelter if conditions deteriorate. The go/no-go thresholds you define must be specific enough to make a real decision, not vague enough to be ignored when the group is keen to depart.

Weather planning in Australia also carries a particular urgency because of the extremes involved. The Blue Mountains, the Victorian Alps, the Flinders Ranges, and most other popular bushwalking areas are subject to rapid and severe weather changes, afternoon thunderstorms that develop without warning in summer, overnight temperature drops of 15–20°C in alpine areas, and fire weather conditions that can change a landscape within hours. These are not rare events. They are routine features of the Australian outdoors, and a plan that does not account for them has not been properly thought through.

Understanding the Australian Weather Landscape

Effective weather planning requires more than checking a seven-day forecast. It requires understanding the seasonal patterns of the specific area, the characteristic weather risks of the terrain type, and the tools available to monitor and interpret conditions accurately.

Seasonal patterns vary significantly by region and altitude. As broad guidance for common Australian bushwalking areas:

Summer (December–February): High heat, high UV, afternoon thunderstorm risk in elevated areas, extreme fire danger days. The primary risks are heat exhaustion, hypothermia from wet clothing after storms, and bushfire. Plan for early starts and camp before afternoon storm window (typically 1–4pm in mountain areas).

- *Autumn (March–May):* Generally the most stable season in many areas. Shorter daylight hours reduce the daily walking window. Fire danger reduces but remains relevant until April in most areas.
- *Winter (June–August):* Cold, potentially wet, early dark. Snow risk in alpine areas above 1,000m. Hypothermia risk is significant, particularly for wet-and-wind combinations. Reduced daylight means Naismith timing gates are tighter.
- *Spring (September–November):* Rapidly warming but unstable. Spring storms, creek flooding from snowmelt or rain, unpredictable temperature swings. Water sources are typically most reliable but may be high and fast.

Terrain effects on weather are substantial. Elevated terrain creates its own conditions, orographic cloud, wind acceleration over ridge-lines, rapid afternoon storm development. Gorges and canyons concentrate water flow dramatically in rain events, making creek crossings that are straightforward in dry conditions lethal after 30 minutes of upstream rain. These terrain-specific risks must be reflected in the route planning and the go/no-go thresholds.

Sources and Tools

No single weather source is sufficient for expedition planning. The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) is the authoritative Australian source and the starting point for all weather research, but its forecasts are most accurate within 48–72 hours and at a regional scale. Effective planning uses multiple sources and understands what each is best suited for.

BOM (bom.gov.au), use for: official forecasts at the closest weather station to your area, radar loop for precipitation tracking, severe weather warnings, fire weather forecasts, and seasonal climate outlooks. The BOM app provides location-based forecasts and warnings. For mountain areas, check the nearest high-altitude station, not the valley town.

Windy (windy.com), use for: detailed wind speed and direction at altitude, storm track visualisation, and weather model comparisons. Particularly useful for elevated routes where wind is a key hazard. Allows you to visualise wind at different altitude layers.

RFS Fire Danger Rating (rfs.nsw.gov.au), use for: current and forecast fire danger ratings by district, total fire bans, and active fire alerts. This must be checked within 24 hours of departure and again on each morning of the journey. A Catastrophic or Extreme fire danger rating on any day of the journey is a no-go condition without exception.

Weatherzone (weatherzone.com.au), use for: cross-checking BOM forecasts and accessing additional model data. Useful for comparison when BOM and other sources diverge.

Offline tools, for remote areas with no mobile coverage, printed weather charts and synoptic maps must be prepared before departure. A leader who can read a synoptic chart can make informed weather decisions in the field without relying on connectivity. This is a core skill for remote area leadership.

Setting Go/No-Go Thresholds

The most important output of weather planning is not a forecast, it is a set of specific, pre-agreed thresholds that define when the activity proceeds as planned, when it is modified, and when it is cancelled. These thresholds must be set during the planning phase, written into the risk assessment and weather plan, and briefed to all participants before departure.

Thresholds defined in advance remove the pressure of making a difficult decision in the moment, with a keen group ready to go and social pressure to proceed. A leader who has pre-committed to "we do not cross any creek above knee height" does not need to make a judgement call at the crossing, the decision has already been made in a calm, considered context.

Effective thresholds are specific and measurable. "Bad weather" is not a threshold. These are:

Variable	Proceed	Modify	No-Go
Rainfall (forecast)	<10mm/day	10–25mm/day, review route, avoid creek crossings	>25mm/day or sustained heavy rain
Wind speed	<30km/h	30–50km/h, avoid exposed ridges, reduce pace	>50km/h sustained or gusts >70km/h
Temperature (max)	<32°C	32–38°C, early start, extra water, reduce distance	>38°C or Total Fire Ban day
Fire Danger Rating	Low–High	Very High, monitor, have exit plan ready	Severe, Extreme, or Catastrophic
Lightning	None forecast	Isolated storms possible, avoid peaks, have shelter plan	Thunderstorms forecast for activity area and hours
Creek level	Normal flow	Elevated but passable at knee depth or less	Above knee depth, fast flow, or post-heavy-rain surge

Calibrate these values to your specific area, season, and group capability. The values above are indicative for Blue Mountains / NSW conditions. Alpine areas require tighter thresholds, particularly for temperature, wind, and precipitation.

Weather as a Dynamic Input Throughout the Journey

Weather planning does not end at departure. It is a continuous process from the planning phase through to the final day of the journey.

Ten to seven days out: first serious forecast review. Identify any significant weather systems and assess whether they affect the planned dates. This is early enough to postpone if a major event is forecast and late enough that the forecast has meaningful accuracy.

Three to two days out: detailed forecast review. Confirm or adjust go/no-go assessment. Brief participants and families on current outlook. Confirm all threshold values are current and agreed.

Day before departure: final forecast check. Confirm fire danger ratings, radar, and severe weather warnings. Make the final go/no-go call. Brief the group on weather expectations for Day 1.

Each morning in the field: check conditions against plan. Review the day's forecast against thresholds. Make decisions about pace, route, timing, and contingency options before the group departs camp. Do not make these decisions at the problem, make them before it.

Key Components

Component	Description
Seasonal Pattern Research	Historical weather patterns for the area and season reviewed before route planning begins.
Forecast Sources	Multiple sources used: BOM, Windy, RFS, Weatherzone. No single source relied upon.
Go/No-Go Thresholds	Specific, measurable values for each key weather variable. Written into the risk assessment.
Monitoring Schedule	Defined check-in points from T−10 days through to each morning in the field.
Contingency Plans	Specific alternative actions for each threshold breach: route modification, layover, evacuation.
Offline Preparation	Printed synoptic charts or downloaded forecasts for areas with no mobile coverage.

Steps to Complete

- Research seasonal weather patterns for the specific area and route before finalising the route plan.

- Define specific, measurable go/no-go thresholds for each key variable and record them in the risk assessment.
- Set up the monitoring schedule: T−10 days, T−3 days, T−1 day, and each morning in the field.
- Identify the primary and backup weather sources to be used throughout the journey.
- Prepare offline tools (printed charts, downloaded forecasts) for any sections without mobile coverage.
- Brief the group and emergency contacts on the go/no-go thresholds before departure.
- Check fire danger ratings and severe weather warnings within 24 hours of departure.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Set go/no-go thresholds during the planning phase, not on the morning of departure. Pre-committed thresholds remove social pressure from difficult in-the-moment decisions.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Prepare offline weather tools for remote areas. A printed synoptic chart and a leader who can read it is worth more than a dead phone battery.

> **PITFALL** Using a single weather source. BOM forecasts are authoritative but regional and short-range. Cross-check with Windy for wind detail and Weatherzone for model comparison, especially for elevated terrain.

> **PITFALL** Setting vague thresholds such as "if the weather is bad we will reassess." In the field, with a keen group ready to go, vague thresholds are always interpreted optimistically. Specific numbers make real decisions possible.

CHAPTER 14

Mentor and Guide Approval – Earning the Green Light

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Why mentor engagement starts at T-12 weeks, not at the approval meeting
- What the mentor is actually checking - and what the guide checks separately
- What approval means and what it does not mean

Typical time: Six touchpoints across the planning cycle

"Approval is not a rubber stamp. It is the considered judgement of an experienced person that the plan is sound, the risks are managed, and the group is ready."

The Mentor Relationship, Built From the Start, Not the End

The approval of a mentor and guide is the final gate before an adventurous activity proceeds. But if that approval is the first time a mentor has engaged with the plan, something has gone wrong.

The mentor's role is not to review a completed document and sign it off. It is to be a thinking partner throughout the entire planning process, from the first conversation about purpose and route concept, through the development of the risk assessment and logistics, to the final readiness review before departure. A mentor who is only called in at the end cannot fulfil that role effectively, because the decisions that most need experienced scrutiny, route selection, risk assessment, group capability matching, have already been made and locked in by the time the document lands in their inbox.

The planning timeline in Chapter 3 reflects this model. Mentor involvement begins at T-12 to 10 weeks, when the journey concept is first shaped. It continues through every substantive planning phase: challenging the route concept against terrain and participant capability, reviewing the first-pass risk assessment for missed hazards and inadequate controls, stress-testing the budget for realism, and confirming that the water plan, transport arrangements, and trip intention all reflect the same journey. By the time the Journey Leader presents the complete plan for final approval, the mentor should have seen every major element at least once in draft form.

An experienced mentor working alongside a developing Journey Leader does not just improve the document. They build the Journey Leader's understanding of why each element matters, what good looks like, and how to recognise when a plan is genuinely ready versus superficially complete. That learning is the deeper purpose of the mentoring relationship, and it only happens through sustained engagement, not a single end-of-process review.

> *'If your mentor's first question is 'when did you want to leave?' and yours is 'next Saturday', the approval conversation is already two months too short.'*

The Role of the Mentor

The mentor is an experienced person, typically a qualified or highly experienced outdoor leader within the same organisation, who takes personal responsibility for supporting the Journey Leader through the planning process and assessing the suitability of the plan before it proceeds.

Specifically, the mentor's role includes:

Working alongside the Journey Leader throughout planning. This means being accessible for questions, attending key planning milestones, reviewing draft documents as they are produced, and providing timely, specific feedback. A mentor who is unreachable during the planning phase cannot provide the oversight the role requires.

Challenging assumptions and identifying gaps. The mentor's most valuable contribution is the question the Journey Leader did not think to ask. Does the daily distance on Day 2 account for the group's likely fatigue level after Day 1? Has the risk assessment identified the creek crossing that only appears hazardous after rain? Is the budget based on current permit fees or figures from two years ago? The mentor's experience is the source of these questions, and asking them early, before the plan is finalised, is far more useful than noting gaps after approval.

Assessing the Journey Leader's readiness. The plan is only as reliable as the person executing it. The mentor is also assessing whether the Journey Leader has genuinely understood what they have planned, whether they can explain the route, articulate the key risks and controls, demonstrate that they have checked the weather and the fire situation, and respond confidently to "what would you do if..." questions. A polished document produced by someone who does not understand its contents is not an approved plan, it is a false safety net.

Giving final approval with genuine authority. When the mentor approves a plan, they are making a professional judgement that the journey is suitable for the group, the risks have been identified and adequately managed, and the Journey Leader is competent to lead it. That judgement carries real weight, and it should only be given when the mentor is genuinely satisfied, not as a courtesy, not under time pressure, and not based on an incomplete review.

The Role of the Guide

The guide is a separately qualified person, typically holding a relevant outdoor qualification for the activity type, whose approval confirms the technical suitability of the plan for the specific terrain and activity. Where the mentor's focus is on the planning process and the Journey Leader's readiness, the guide's focus is on technical correctness: is the route appropriate for the group's qualification level, is the risk assessment technically sound for the terrain, and are the activity-specific controls consistent with current best practice?

In some organisations and activities, the mentor and guide roles may be held by the same person. Where they are separate, both approvals are required, and the guide's review should focus on the technical elements rather than duplicating the mentor's broader assessment.

What the Complete Plan Must Demonstrate

When the Journey Leader presents the plan for final mentor approval, every element of the planning spine should be complete, consistent with each other, and reflective of the actual journey being proposed. The mentor is not approving documents in isolation, they are approving a coherent, integrated plan that hangs together as a whole.

Element	What the Mentor is Checking
Journey Overview	Purpose, dates, and participant profile are clearly defined and appropriate for the group.
Approvers	Mentor and guide are identified, their roles are confirmed, and they have been engaged throughout the planning process.
Route Plan	Route is suitable for the group's capability, legs are realistic, timing is achievable, and alternatives exist.
Risk Assessment	Hazards are specific to this route and group, controls are genuine and verifiable, and residual risk is acceptable.
Meal and Water Plan	Nutritional adequacy confirmed for the activity level, emergency food allocated, water sources identified and contingencies planned.
Transport Plan	All movement phases documented, drivers and vehicles confirmed, contingencies in place.
Budget	All costs researched and realistic, contingency applied, per-person cost confirmed.
Activity Plan	Supervision ratios, participant roles, and field emergency procedures are documented and appropriate.
Consent	Consent has been obtained from parents or guardians for all youth members, or from adult participants directly. Individuals understand the route, risks, and physical demands.
Trip Intention	Lodged with the relevant authority, confirmation evidence retained, emergency contacts identified and briefed.
Notifications	All required parties have been notified: families, organisation leadership, land managers, and local emergency services where applicable.
Weather Plan	Thresholds defined, monitoring schedule in place, go/no-go criteria agreed.
Journey Leader Readiness	Can explain every element of the plan, has answered challenge questions confidently, and understands the key decision points in the field.

What Approval Is, and Is Not

Approval is the mentor's considered judgement that the plan is sound and the activity should proceed. It is not a guarantee that nothing will go wrong, no plan can provide that. It is a professional assessment, made in good faith by a qualified person, that the risks have been identified and managed to an acceptable level and that the Journey Leader is competent to execute the plan.

Approval given without genuine engagement with the plan, signed off quickly to meet a deadline, or given without actually reading the documents, does not fulfil the mentor's duty. It creates the appearance of oversight without the substance, and in the event of an incident, it protects no one.

Equally, approval withheld without specific, actionable feedback is not useful. If the mentor does not approve the plan, they must say specifically what is missing, inadequate, or unacceptable, and work with the Journey Leader to address it. The goal is a plan that is genuinely ready, not a plan that meets a process requirement.

STRONG PRACTICE When presenting the plan for final approval, the Journey Leader should be able to walk through every element from memory and answer "what would you do if..." questions about the key risks. If they cannot, the plan is not ready.

STRONG PRACTICE The mentor should be identified and engaged before planning begins, not after the plan is written. If the Journey Leader does not have a mentor at T−10 weeks, finding one is the first planning task.

PITFALL Approving a plan because it looks complete, rather than because it is genuinely understood. The documents reflect the thinking, if the thinking is not there, or copied from somewhere else, the documents are a facade.

PITFALL Treating mentor approval as an administrative step at the end of planning rather than a relationship that runs through the whole process. A mentor who sees the plan for the first time at the approval meeting cannot provide genuine oversight.

CHAPTER 15

Common Failure Points – Lessons from the Trail

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- The ten most common planning failures and why they happen
- How to use this list before you start and again before you submit
- The patterns that catch even experienced leaders

Typical time: 20 minutes to read; worth re-reading before submission

"The path is littered with pitfalls, but wisdom turns them into stepping stones."

Every planning failure documented below has occurred on real journeys, in real organisations, with leaders who intended to do the right thing. They are not the product of negligence or indifference. They are the predictable outcomes of patterns that are easy to fall into, especially for developing leaders working under time pressure without strong mentoring support.

Reading this list before you begin planning is useful. Reading it again before you submit for approval is more useful still. The most common failures are not exotic or hard to predict. They are the things that got rushed, assumed, or left until last.

The Hidden Pattern Beneath the Failures

A common thread runs across all of them: each one involves a decision that was deferred, assumed, or handed off without confirmation. Planning fails not because leaders lack knowledge, but because the planning process itself allows critical decisions to feel complete before they actually are. Writing something down is not the same as deciding it. Listing a driver's name is not the same as confirming they will be there. Noting "emergency food" in a plan is not the same as specifying what, how much, and who carries it. The document creates the illusion of a decision while the real decision remains unmade and this is why experienced leaders fall into the same traps as beginners.

Two Questions to Ask Before Submission

Before submitting any plan, work through it twice with these two questions:

"Have I written this, or have I decided this?"

For every item in your plan, ask whether you have genuinely confirmed it or simply recorded an intention. Costs need sources. Drivers need confirmation. Food needs a check.

"If this person never reads this document, will the thing still happen?"

Emergency contacts who haven't been briefed won't know what to do. Drivers who haven't been confirmed may not show. The plan cannot do the work that conversation and verification must do.

Failure Point	Why It Happens	How to Prevent It
Planning starts too late	The journey feels far away; other priorities crowd out early planning tasks.	Lock a planning calendar at T-12 weeks. Treat the first planning session as a fixed commitment, not a when-I-have-time task.
Route and risk don't match	The route plan and risk assessment are written separately and never compared.	Run a deliberate side-by-side review before submission. Every significant terrain feature on the route must appear in the risk assessment.
Generic risk controls	Controls are written quickly to fill the document, not to guide field decisions.	For each control, ask: how would I verify this was done? If there's no answer, rewrite it.
Budget optimism	Costs are estimated from memory or old figures rather than current research.	Every line item needs a source. No estimating.
Self-catering without validation	The Journey Leader delegates food to participants but does not check what they actually bring.	Conduct a pre-departure food check for every participant.
No emergency food allocation	The emergency day is treated as optional or left to individuals to manage.	Plan and specify the emergency food as part of the meal plan, not as a verbal instruction.
Unbriefed emergency contacts	Emergency contacts are listed on the trip intention form but never spoken to.	Brief every emergency contact personally before departure. Confirm they know the trigger time and what to do.
Unclear transport ownership	Drivers are assumed rather than confirmed. Passenger allocation is sorted at the assembly point.	Name every driver, confirm every vehicle, and assign passengers before departure day.
Weather threshold vagueness	Thresholds like "if conditions are bad" leave the decision to in-the-moment judgement.	Specific numbers only. Define thresholds during planning, not at the trailhead.
Approval treated as a final step	The mentor sees the plan for the first time at the approval meeting.	Engage the mentor from the start. The approval conversation should contain no surprises.

A Note on Approval

Many of the failures above are invisible at the approval stage. A well-formatted plan with a complete risk assessment looks the same as a well-formatted plan where the route and risk assessment were never compared. Approval processes catch missing sections, not missing substance.

This means the responsibility for plan quality cannot be outsourced to the approval meeting. By the time the mentor or approver sees the document, every item in this list should already be resolved. The approval conversation should contain no surprises, for either party.

> *'Every failure on this list has happened before. Some of them have happened many times, to competent, well-intentioned leaders who all had one thing in common: they were completely certain it wouldn't happen to them.'*

CHAPTER 16

Mentor Working Model – Cadence for Coaching

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- A six-week mentor cadence with specific focus for each session
- Why the early sessions have the most leverage
- How to use Week 6 to role-play field scenarios

Typical time: One session per week across six weeks

"Mentoring is the guiding star. Use this rhythm to illuminate the path for youth teams."

Mentor and Journey Leader reviewing the route plan together. the working relationship that makes every journey safer.

What It Means to Be a Mentor

You have likely reached this chapter because you are preparing to mentor a Journey Leader for the first time, or because you are early in your mentoring practice and want to do it well. The fact that you are reading this carefully is already a good sign. The mentors who cause the most harm are not the ones who lack experience, they are the ones who underestimate the role.

If you have worked through this handbook, you have the technical foundation. You understand route planning, risk assessment, weather, nutrition, and logistics. Your task now is to help a Journey Leader develop that same understanding, not by telling them what you know, but by asking questions that help them discover it themselves.

This is not a review role. It is not a sign-off function. It is not a matter of reading a document, asking a few questions, and adding your name to an approval form. If that is how you approach it, you will add little, and the Journey Leader in front of you will learn almost nothing from the experience.

Mentoring in this context is a transfer of judgment. You have made decisions in the field that this Journey Leader has not yet made. You have read weather in real time, managed group dynamics under pressure, navigated the gap between a plan and reality. That accumulated experience is what you are here to pass on , not as instruction, but as the kind of questioning that builds the capacity to think well under pressure.

The Relationship Is the Work

Good mentoring does not happen in formal sessions. It happens in the quality of the relationship that makes those sessions honest. A Journey Leader who is uncertain, embarrassed, or intimidated by their mentor will not bring their real concerns to the table. They will show you the parts of the plan they are confident about and quietly avoid the parts they are not. If that happens, you have not failed as a reviewer, you have failed as a mentor.

Your first task is to create the conditions where the Journey Leader in front of you is willing to say *I don't know* and *I got this wrong* and *I'm not sure this is a good idea*. Without that, you are checking a document. With it, you are developing a leader.

The Weight of the Role

The plans that go wrong in the field almost always passed through a mentoring process. Someone saw the document. Someone asked questions. Someone signed off. This does not mean the mentor was negligent, it means that the failures most likely to cause harm are the ones that look like reasonable decisions until they aren't.

Depending on the nature and risk level of the journey, your assessment may be the final review before the Journey Leader's plan is approved, or it may pass to a Guide for further scrutiny. Either way, you are a critical point in that process. You are not there to rubber-stamp a document, you are there to ensure that a Journey Leader and their group are genuinely ready. That is reason enough to push back when something doesn't feel right, even when the plan looks complete, even when the Journey Leader seems confident, and even when approving is easier than questioning.

What You Are Building

The Journey Leader you are mentoring will almost certainly mentor someone else one day. The standard they set in their planning will reflect the standard they experienced in their mentoring. The questions you ask them now are the questions they will eventually learn to ask themselves, and later, to ask others.

This is the longest return on the investment of your time. Not the journey that is about to happen, but the twenty journeys after it, run by a Journey Leader who learned from this one what careful thinking actually looks like.

The Cadence of Mentoring

The six-week cadence below is a practical model for mentors working with youth or developing leaders through a complete planning cycle. It is not a rigid script. Every journey is different, every leader is at a different stage of development, and every mentor brings their own style. What the cadence provides is a structure that ensures the important conversations happen at the right time, before the decisions they inform have already been made.

The most valuable sessions are the early ones. Week 1 and Week 2 are where the mentor has the greatest influence, because they happen before significant work has been invested and before assumptions have hardened into plans. A mentor who catches a route concept that exceeds the group's capability in Week 1 saves hours of rework. The same observation in Week 5 is disruptive and demoralising.

Mentors should approach each session not as a reviewer but as a thinking partner. The goal is not to find fault with the Journey Leader's work. It is to ask the questions the Journey Leader has not yet thought to ask, to share the experience that the Journey Leader has not yet had, and to build the kind of judgment that will keep groups safe long after this particular journey is complete.

Weather should be woven into every session, not saved for Week 5. The seasonal context, the forecast tools, and the threshold-setting process are all richer when they are connected to the route planning and risk assessment that has been developing through the earlier weeks.

Week	Session Focus
Week 1	Define purpose, route concept, and learning outcomes. Discuss participant capability and seasonal weather patterns for the area. Challenge the initial concept: is the ambition appropriate for this group?
Week 2	Review terrain logic and route draft. Challenge assumptions about daily distances, participant fitness, and hazard exposure. Begin the hazard brainstorm. Review water sources on the proposed route.
Week 3	Review draft route plan and first-pass risk assessment together. Identify the top hazards and test whether the controls are specific and verifiable. Work through elevation and Naismith timings for each leg.
Week 4	Review meal plan, water plan, budget, and transport plan for realism. Test the budget line by line against real costs. Confirm emergency food allocation is included. Check transport ownership is clear.
Week 5	Review the complete plan as an integrated whole. Test coherence across all documents. Set go/no-go weather thresholds. Identify any outstanding gaps before the approval conversation.
Week 6	Final readiness review. Leader walks the mentor through the plan from memory. Challenge questions on key decision points in the field. Confirm external lodgements and emergency contact briefings are complete.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Keep brief notes from each session. Not formal minutes, just enough to track what was discussed, what the Journey Leader committed to do, and whether it was done. This creates an informal record of the mentoring process that supports the final approval.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Use the Week 6 session to role-play field scenarios. "It's Day 2, 11am, you're behind schedule and the weather is deteriorating. What do you do?" If the Journey Leader cannot answer that question confidently, the plan is not ready.

CHAPTER 17

Final Pre-Departure Checklist

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- The pre-departure checklist - every item that must be confirmed before leaving
- Why this check happens the day before, not the morning of
- What to do if an item cannot be resolved

Typical time: Allow 30–60 minutes the day before departure

"The last vigil before the dawn. Ensure all is ready for the quest ahead."

The pre-departure checklist is the final quality gate before the group leaves. At this point, planning is complete, approvals have been obtained, and all the thinking has been done. The checklist is not the place to be discovering gaps, it is the place to confirm they do not exist.

Work through this list in the 24 to 48 hours before departure, not on the morning. Finding that the trip intention was never lodged or that an emergency contact has not been briefed is a problem that can be addressed the day before. On departure morning, there is no time, and the social pressure of a group ready to go makes it very difficult to make the right call.

Any item that cannot be checked off should be resolved before the group departs. If it cannot be resolved, the departure should be delayed until it is. A group that leaves with an unchecked item on this list has accepted a gap in their preparation, and gaps have a way of becoming problems at the worst possible time.

How to Use This Checklist

Each item on this list represents a category of preparation, not a single task. "Emergency contacts confirmed" does not mean the names are written on the form, it means each contact has been spoken to, knows the trigger time, and knows what to do. "Risk assessment approved" does not mean a document exists, it means the controls have been briefed to the people who need to apply them. Work through the list with that standard in mind.

It is worth assigning one person to own this checklist and to be explicitly responsible for confirming each item. When responsibility is shared across a leadership team, it is easy for each person to assume someone else has covered it. A single owner does not mean a single person does all the work, it means one person confirms it is done.

A Note on Social Pressure

The hardest version of this checklist is the one you complete when something is not ready and the group is expecting to leave. Parents have arranged drop-offs. Participants are excited. Equipment is packed. In that moment, delaying or cancelling feels disproportionate, and it is easy to convince yourself that the unchecked item is probably fine.

It is worth deciding now, before you are in that situation, that an incomplete checklist is a reason to pause regardless of the social cost. The Journey Leader who delays a departure because an emergency contact was never briefed will face some short-term frustration. The Journey Leader who proceeds anyway and then needs that contact is in a much worse position.

The checklist only works if it is treated as a genuine gate, not a formality.

Item	Done
Route Plan approved and latest version shared	☐
Risk Assessment approved with controls briefed	☐
Menu Plan approved and dietary risks managed	☐
Water Plan confirmed, sources, purification method, and carry capacity verified	☐
Transport Plan approved and owners confirmed	☐
Budget approved and financial assumptions current	☐
Trip Intention lodged and evidence stored	☐
Activity Plan, Consent, and ANS aligned to final plan	☐
Weather and fire conditions checked against go/no-go thresholds (BOM/ RFS)	☐
Emergency contacts, comms plan, and fallback transport confirmed	☐
Mentor and guide final sign-off completed	☐
Equipment checked and packed	☐
Participant briefings completed	☐

> *'Work through this list a minimum the day before departure, not the morning of. Finding that the trip intention was never lodged at 6am with sixteen excited hikers standing in the car park is an experience that sharpens the mind wonderfully - but not one you want to repeat.'*

CHAPTER 18

Equipment and Gear Management

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Personal and group gear requirements for different journey types
- Pre-departure gear checks and how to run them
- Managing gear across a group of varying experience levels

Typical time: Gear check at T-48 hours

"Gear is your armour in the wild. Forge it well for the battles ahead."

A well-prepared kit: pack, map, compass, water bottle and first aid. each item chosen and checked before departure.

Why Equipment Planning Is Part of Safety Planning

Gear failures in the field are rarely dramatic. They are usually mundane: a sleeping bag that was not checked and turns out to be too light for the overnight temperature, a stove that runs out of fuel on Day 2 because no one counted the canisters, a first aid kit that was assumed to be fully stocked and turns out to be missing items used on the previous trip. Each of these is a problem that planning prevents and assumption creates.

Equipment planning has two distinct phases. Before the journey, the work is about selection and verification: identifying what is needed, confirming it is available and functional, distributing group items across packs, and checking that personal gear meets the requirements of the terrain, season, and activity. This is where the Journey Leader's responsibility is greatest. A participant who has been given a clear gear list and a pre-departure check has been properly supported. A participant who was told to "bring the usual stuff" has not.

In the field, the work is about management: monitoring gear condition, managing shared consumables (fuel, food, first aid), and making decisions about weight and load as the journey progresses. A leader who knows exactly what the group is carrying and where it is distributed can make better decisions under pressure.

Weight management deserves specific attention. A rough guide of 20 percent of personal bodyweight as a maximum pack weight applies across most group profiles, and less for younger or less fit participants. Overloaded packs cause fatigue, change gait, and significantly increase the risk of knee and ankle injuries on technical terrain. Distributing group gear fairly across the group, rather than loading the strongest carriers, also distributes the risk.

Categories

Category	Contents
Personal	Clothing layers for expected and contingency conditions, backpack sized to the journey, sleeping bag rated for overnight temperature, mat, headlamp with spare batteries, water bottles or hydration bladder (sufficient capacity for longest dry stretch).
Group	Navigation kit (topographic maps, compass, GPS as backup), cooking equipment (stove, fuel, pots, utensils), shelter (tents or tarps sized to group), water purification equipment (filter and chemical backup), group first aid kit.
Emergency	PLB (registered and tested), whistle, emergency blanket, signal mirror, repair kit (tent pole, gaffer tape, cord), satellite communicator where required by route remoteness.

STRONG PRACTICE Test all equipment before it is packed, not at the trailhead. A stove that does not light, a sleeping bag with a broken zip, or a PLB with a flat battery are problems that surface at the worst possible time if they are not checked in advance.

STRONG PRACTICE Apply a maximum pack weight of 20 percent of personal bodyweight and adjust downward for younger or less fit participants. Distribute group gear across all capable carriers, not just the strongest ones.

PITFALL Assuming shared equipment from previous trips is still complete and functional. Group first aid kits, cooking gear, and repair kits should be checked and restocked after every journey, not before the next one.

CHAPTER 19

Emergency Procedures

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- The field emergency response framework
- Communication protocols when something goes wrong
- Who makes what decisions and in what order

Typical time: Briefed to all participants before departure

"When the storm hits, preparation is your anchor."

Why Emergency Preparation Cannot Wait Until the Emergency

The standard human response to an emergency is confusion. Even experienced leaders, when confronted with an unexpected incident, lose time to the simple shock of having to shift from normal mode to emergency mode.

Preparation does not eliminate that response, but it compresses it. A leader who has already thought through what they will do if someone is injured at the Day 2 creek crossing, if the group is benighted on the ridge, or if a participant has a medical episode does not need to invent the response under pressure. They need to execute the one they already have.

Emergency preparation in planning has three components. The first is scenario thinking: walking through the likely emergency scenarios for your specific route and group during the planning phase, and working out in advance what the response would be. The second is role assignment: deciding in advance who does what if an incident occurs, so that the group functions rather than freezes. The third is communications: knowing exactly what devices you have, what coverage they provide on each leg of the route, and what the chain of contact is from incident to rescue services to base contacts.

The emergency procedures chapter of your planning should not be generic. "Call 000" is not an emergency plan. For each key leg of the route, the plan should document: the nearest exit point, the evacuation route, the communication options, and the decision point at which outside assistance would be sought. This is the information that matters when a real incident occurs, and it cannot be reconstructed in the field.

Emergency Roles

Before departure, the Journey Leader should assign specific roles to other adults or senior participants in the group. At minimum:

- **Incident commander:** the Journey Leader, or a nominated deputy if the Journey Leader is incapacitated. Makes decisions, communicates with emergency services, manages the scene.
- **First aider:** the person responsible for patient assessment and first aid. Should hold a current first aid certificate appropriate for remote area work.
- **Communications officer:** manages contact with base, emergency services, and families. Knows where all communication devices are and how to use them.
- **Group supervisor:** maintains responsibility for the rest of the group while the incident response is underway. Keeps non-involved participants safe and calm.

Communications in the Field

Mobile phone coverage cannot be assumed in Australian bushland. For most serious routes, mobile coverage is partial at best and non-existent in gorges, thick canopy, and remote ranges. The communication plan must account for this explicitly.

Every group in a remote environment should carry at minimum a registered PLB. The PLB is the device of last resort: activating it initiates a search-and-rescue response and should only be done when the group faces a situation that genuinely requires outside assistance. It is not a substitute for good planning and should not be treated as a reason to accept higher risk.

Satellite communicators provide two-way messaging and location tracking and are increasingly standard practice for multi-day remote journeys. They allow the group to communicate non-emergency updates to base contacts, which reduces unnecessary rescue activations and keeps families informed.

The communications plan should document, for each leg of the route: expected mobile coverage, the primary communication method if mobile is unavailable, and the device to be used for emergency contact. This information belongs in the route plan and should be briefed to the group before departure.

Key Elements

- Evacuation plans and exit points documented for each major leg of the route.

- Communications plan covering device type, coverage expectation, and contact chain for each leg.
- Roles assigned to named individuals before departure.
- Post-incident reporting process confirmed with the organisation.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Brief every adult and senior participant on the emergency roles and communications plan before departing, not at the incident. A group that knows the plan in advance is a group that can execute it.

> **PITFALL** Treating the PLB as the complete emergency plan. A PLB activates a rescue. It does not treat injuries, keep participants warm, navigate to an extraction point, or manage a frightened group. The full plan is required alongside it.

CHAPTER 20

Post-Trip Debrief and Review

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

- Running a structured debrief that actually improves future journeys
- What to document and where it goes
- How to close the planning loop with your mentor

Typical time: Allow 45–60 minutes post-journey

"As the trail fades, the true treasure reveals in lessons learned. Gather around the fire to etch wisdom for future quests."

The group gathers at golden hour for a debrief. reviewing what worked, what didn't, and what to do better next time.

Closing the Loop

Every journey is an investment. Hours of planning, weeks of preparation, real money, physical effort, and the trust of participants and their families. A debrief is how that investment compounds. Done well, it extracts the learning from the experience and converts it into better planning, better leadership, and better journeys in the future.

Skipped, it leaves the lessons locked inside individuals who may not be the ones planning the next trip.

The debrief is also an act of respect toward the participants. It says that what they experienced mattered, that their observations are valued, and that the organisation is serious about continuous improvement. A group that is genuinely asked what worked and what did not will give honest answers. Those answers are among the most useful inputs a planning process can receive.

There is a third reason to debrief that is less often discussed: accountability. A debrief that examines what actually happened against what was planned provides an honest view of whether the planning was adequate. If the risk controls worked as designed, that is worth documenting. If a hazard was encountered that the risk assessment had not identified, that is equally worth documenting, and the assessment needs to be updated to reflect it. If the meal quantities were wrong, or the weather thresholds were too conservative, or the first leg timing was significantly off, those findings should go back into the planning documents so that the next trip benefits from them.

Plan, Do, Review

The debrief is the Review stage of a continuous improvement cycle. Adventurous activity leadership is built on this discipline: ***Plan*** the journey thoroughly, ***Do*** it with care and skill, and ***Review*** it honestly to improve the next one. The three stages are only useful if all three are completed. A Plan without a Review is a one-off event. A Plan with a Review is the foundation of a learning organisation.

Plan is the work described in this guide: defining purpose, building the route, assessing risks, planning nutrition and logistics, obtaining approval, and preparing the group. The quality of the Plan creates the baseline against which the Review can measure.

Do is the execution of the journey: the navigation decisions, the leadership calls, the management of conditions, the care of participants, and the response to whatever the field presents that the plan did not anticipate. Do is where the plan meets reality.

Review is the honest examination of how the Do compared to the Plan. Not to assign blame, but to build understanding. What held up under pressure? What did not? What should be carried forward into the next Plan, and what should be changed?

How to Conduct the Debrief

The debrief should happen as soon as practical after the group returns, while memories and impressions are fresh. A structured conversation of 30 to 60 minutes, working through the three sections below, produces more useful output than an informal debrief or a written survey completed days later.

The Journey Leader facilitates, but should not dominate. The participants, particularly youth members, often notice things the Journey Leader did not. Their observations about what felt uncertain, what was confusing, or what was more difficult than expected are valuable data.

Key Actions After the Debrief

- Record the debrief outputs formally, not just as notes.

- Update planning documents (route plan, risk assessment, meal plan) to reflect lessons learned. If a hazard was encountered that was not in the risk assessment, add it.
- Log actual costs against the budget and return any surplus.
- Note gear condition issues and schedule repairs or replacements before the next use.
- Share key lessons with the organisation, not just the immediate team. The value of a good debrief multiplies when others can learn from it.
- Acknowledge the participants' efforts. The close of a debrief is the right moment to recognise what the group achieved.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Share debrief summaries across the organisation. A failure point that one leader encountered and learned from can prevent the same failure for every leader who reads about it.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Update the risk assessment and route plan immediately after the debrief while the observations are specific and actionable. A note that says "review creek crossing" is useful for six months. After that, no one remembers which crossing or why.

A Final Note

Once upon a time on a three-day hike, a young person participated, and at first mealtime was found to have nothing but beef jerky. Every meal, every day. He was not being difficult, he simply had not been asked to think about it, and no one had checked. By Day 2, he was the most popular person hiking, because everyone felt sorry for him and shared their own food.

Meal plans exist for exactly this reason.
So does the pre-departure food check.
So, in a roundabout way, does this guide.

The eleven elements in Part One are not designed to be a burden.
They are the difference between a journey that becomes a story worth telling and one that becomes a story told in hushed tones at the next committee meeting, or even one used as an example at adventurous activity training sessions.
Every valley view, every campfire, every moment a young person looks back at a ridge line they just crossed and realises they are more capable than they thought, that is the return on the investment this planning framework represents.

I have been the emergency contact for two separate Adventurous Journey incidents, one requiring an evacuation, one a helicopter rescue. On the second, my phone rang. A young member of the party had taken charge after the Journey Leader was seriously injured. He was calm and told me what had happened, what condition the party was in, what they were doing, importantly also what they were NOT doing, and that he was about to activate the EPIRB. Then he did. Seconds later, my phone rang again, emergency services, confirming the activation. I was able to tell them exactly where the party was, the details of the route plan, the group's experience and training, and the terrain they were in. I had that information because I had been properly briefed before they left.

That is what a briefed emergency contact looks like in practice.

I drove to the staging area and spent a considerable amount of time wanting very much to hike in myself. Police Rescue persuaded me otherwise, and they were right. What I remember most clearly is that the system worked. Not because everything went to plan. Because when it did not, everyone knew what to do next. Both incidents had the potential to be devastating. Neither was.

Good plans do not prevent things from going wrong. They determine what happens when something does.

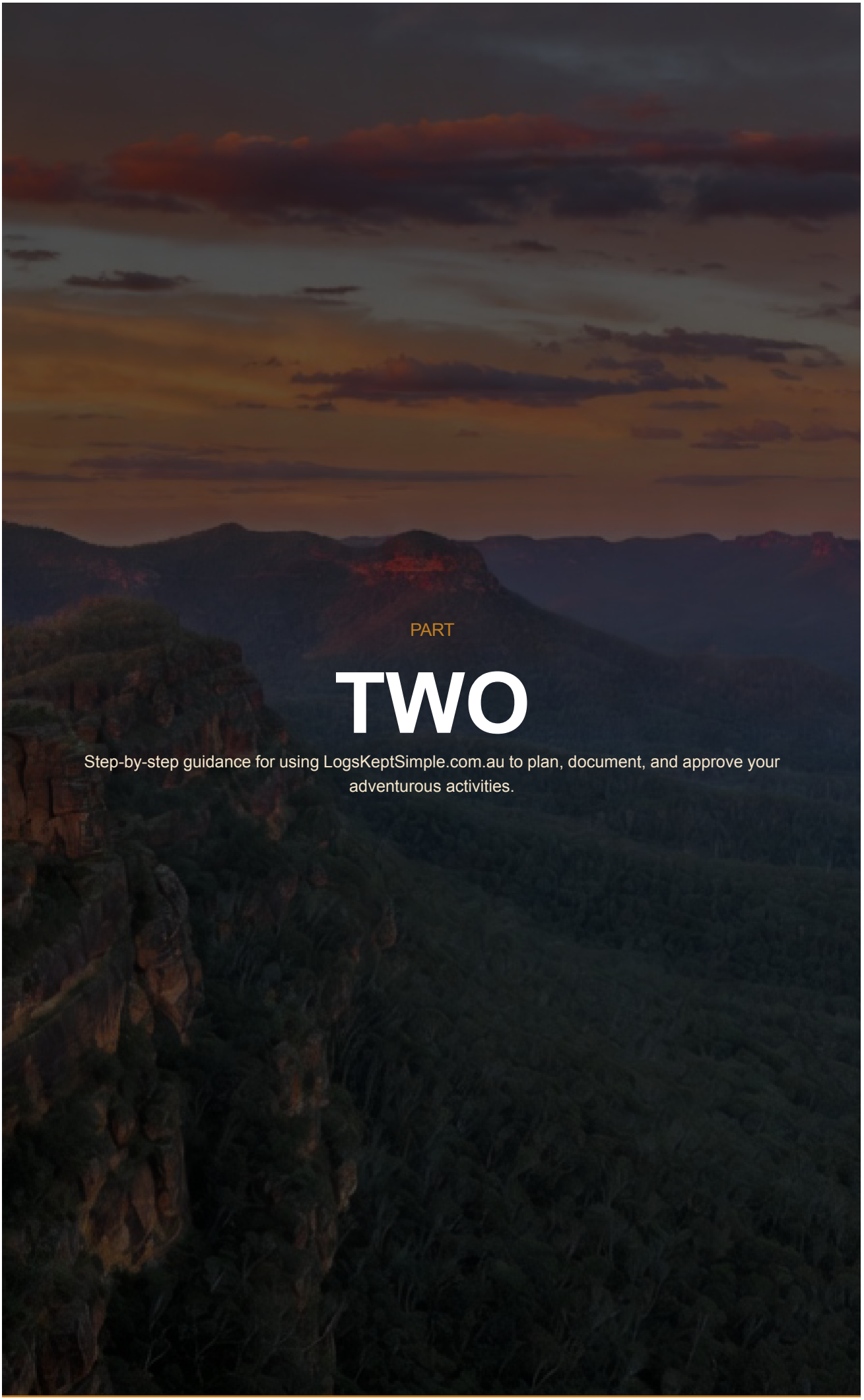
Before you move to Part Two, one practical note.
Appendix A at the back of this guide contains printable checklists for all eleven planning elements.
They are designed to be used. Print them, work through them with a pen, and file them with your planning documents. A tick on a checklist is evidence that something was done. Evidence matters more than memory when the weather turns or the creek is higher than expected.

Part Two walks through LogsKeptSimple.com.au, where the planning lives in practice.
If Part One is the thinking, Part Two is where you build it.

Now go plan something worth doing.

And check the weather.

Andrew Davis



PART

TWO

Step-by-step guidance for using LogsKeptSimple.com.au to plan, document, and approve your adventurous activities.

CHAPTER 21

Introducing LogsKeptSimple.com.au

LogsKeptSimple.com.au is a web-based platform built by Andrew Davis - a Scout leader from the Blue Mountains - to solve a problem he kept running into, that is, the paperwork side of outdoor leadership was scattered, inconsistent, and entirely disconnected from the planning side. Risk assessments lived in email attachments. Route plans were rebuilt from scratch each time. Approvals happened with no trail. When something went wrong, there was no single record showing what had been planned, checked, and agreed.

LogsKeptSimple.com.au was built to fix that. It gives journey leaders, be they youth or adults, one place to build every planning document, run every approval, and keep every record. When a journey is complete, the full history - plans, approvals, changes, and sign-offs - is stored and accessible.

What the Platform Does

The dashboard shown above reflects the full scope of what LogsKeptSimple.com.au manages.
The platform currently supports five activity types: Hiking, Paddling, Vertical, Camping, and Pioneering. Each activity type has its own log structure, and Users can maintain separate records for each discipline. A user with hikes, paddles, and vertical activities has a complete, searchable record of everything they have led.

Beyond logging, the platform provides a full suite of planning and approval tools. The Route Planner lets Users map routes and generate a complete route card ready for submission and use. The Risk Assessment module draws from a library of pre-built assessments that can be tailored to specific journeys. Activity Plans bring together core details, participant roles, and field emergency procedures in a single document. The Log Wizard creates printable activity logs with evidence attached - a critical requirement for qualifications, accreditation and formal review.

Why It Was Built

Good planning requirements are specific. The eleven planning elements in Part One of this guide are not generic outdoor education concepts - they are the framework that are best practice for journey leaders to work through before every approved activity.

LogsKeptSimple.com.au was built around that framework.

Every document the platform generates maps to one of those eleven elements. Every approval workflow follows the mentor and guide structure described in Chapter 14.

The platform does not replace the thinking that Part One requires. It organises the outputs so that the thinking is visible, auditable, and complete.

Getting Started

LogsKeptSimple.com.au is freely available at no cost to the User, ever.
There is no advertising and it will never sell your data or your details.

The website is a tool to be used by anyone needing to plan an adventurous activity, without the associated revenue baggage, in order to help the community be safer in their planning.

Allowing youth, and adults, to learn how to manage their own risk and be safer in the field is the number one goal.

A companion iOS and Android app is available for GPS tracking in the field, with automatic track upload directly into your activity log.

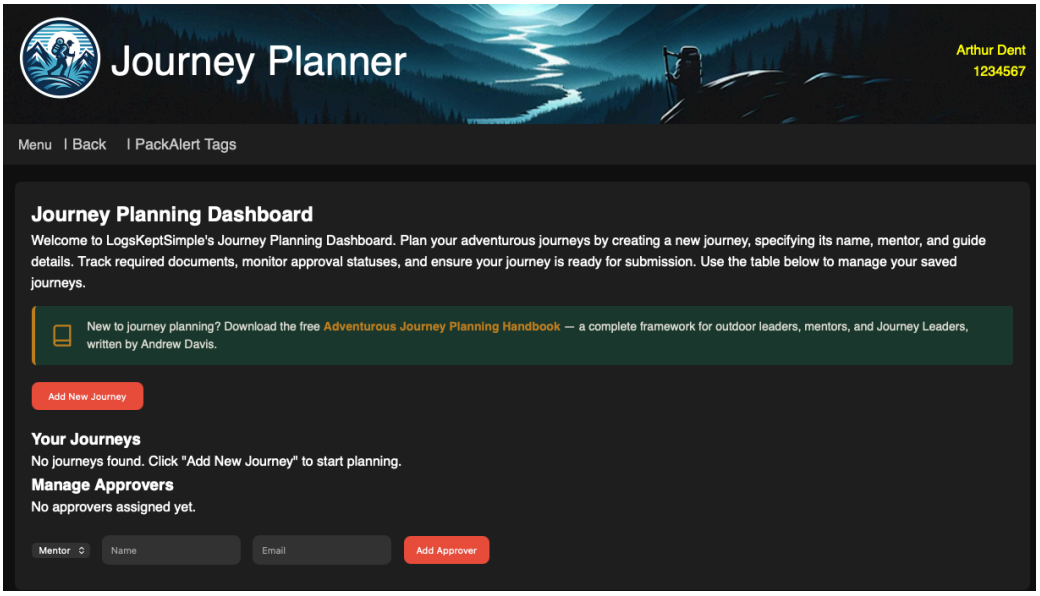
The chapters that follow walk through each planning document in the same order they appear in the platform's workflow.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Set up your journey record and add your Mentor and Guide before building any planning document. The approval chain must be established first or document submissions will stall.

CHAPTER 22

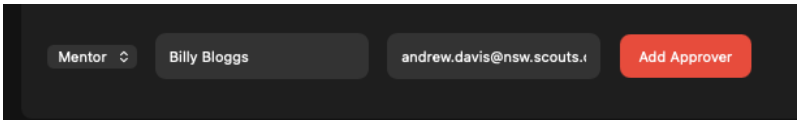
Journey Plan

The first step is to go to the main menu at the top left and select Planning Tools -> Journey Planner. This takes you in to the dashboard for all your Journeys.

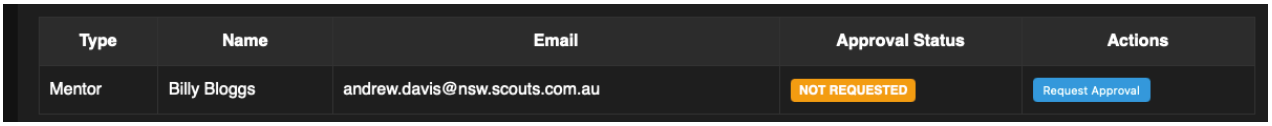


At the bottom of the page, your very first task is to configure your mentor and guide that have agreed to assist in your planning.

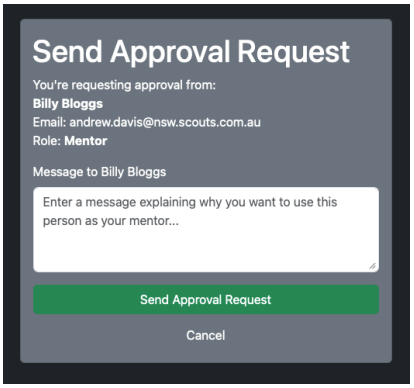
Select the type and enter their details.



This adds them to the table of Approvers and then give you the means to request that they assist you.



By clicking the 'Request Approval' button you are presented with the 'Send Approval Request' popup. Fill out the details and don't forget to include the message as to why you are requesting their mentor or guide status.

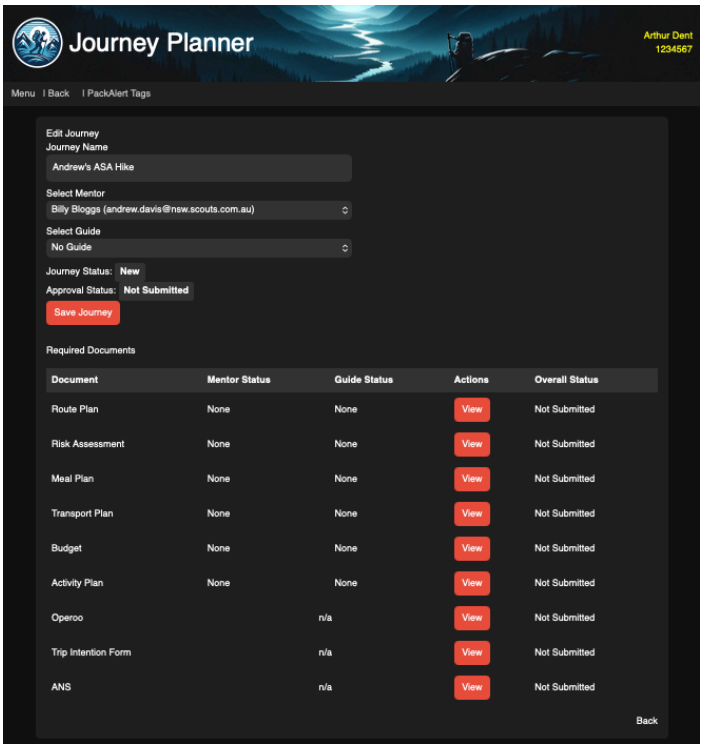


Approval Request Process

Once the form has been submitted, the Mentor/Guide will receive an email informing them of your request. From this email they can accept or deny the request and add a note.
This will then be visible in the Manage Approvers portion of the dashboard.
Once they are in an 'Approved' status they are ready to use and will be available in the approver dropdown fields for all your approvals.

Start the Journey process

You are now ready to click the 'Add New Journey' button.
Simply fill out the Journey name, something that sets this journey apart from your others, such as ***Andrew's ASA Hike*** or ***Kelly's KSA Paddle***.
At this point selection the Mentor/Guide for this journey.
You can have different Mentor/Guides for different planning tasks, just add in more on the dashboard and seek their approval.



You are now all setup with the basis of your Adventurous Journey planning.
You have a Mentor/Guide setup and the base details ready to start the planning proper.
This is where the setup process finishes and where you will start each of the individual planning tasks.
The first one is Route Plan and we will move onto that in the next section.

Steps to Complete

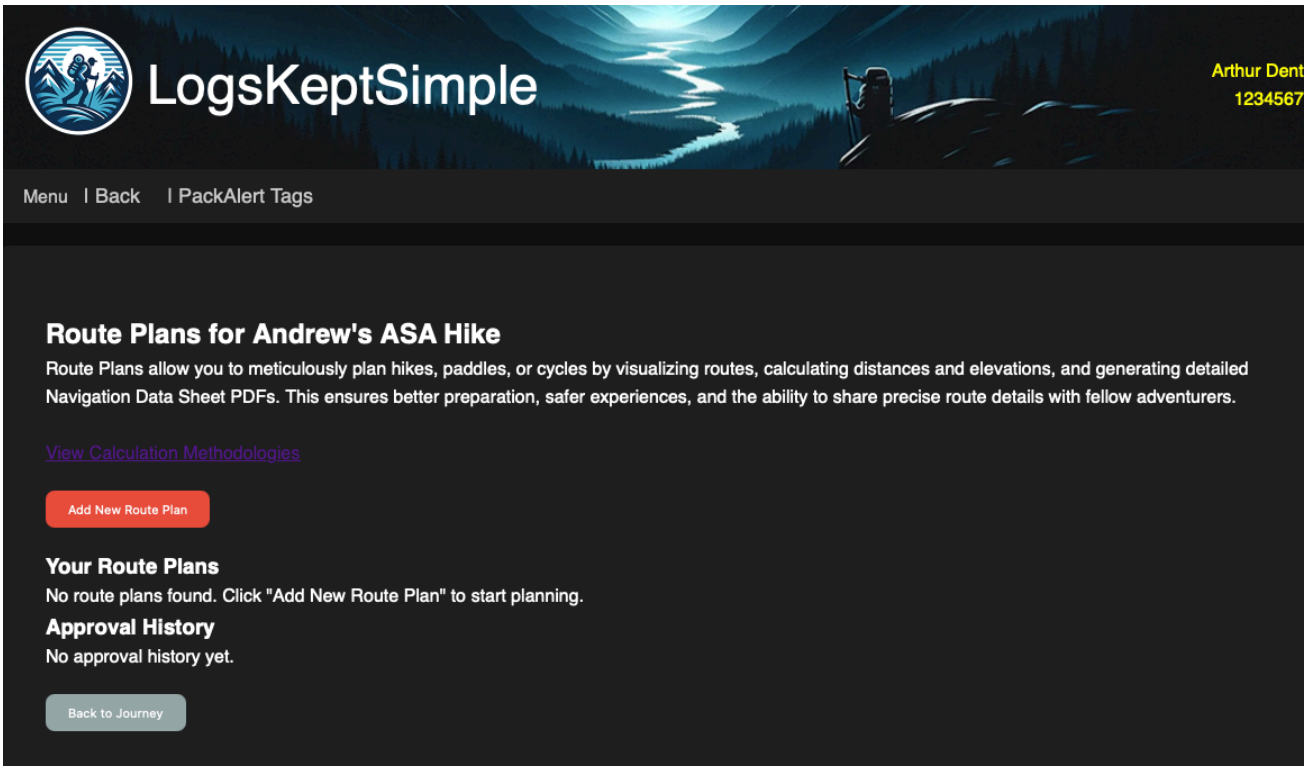
- Add the Mentor/Guide that you want to use and send them a meaningful message in the approval step
- Name your Journey as a unique, easy to understand name
- Select the Mentor/Guide for the overall Journey approval

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Ensure that the name of your Journey will make it unique, Not just ASA Hike or something generic, this will help your approver.

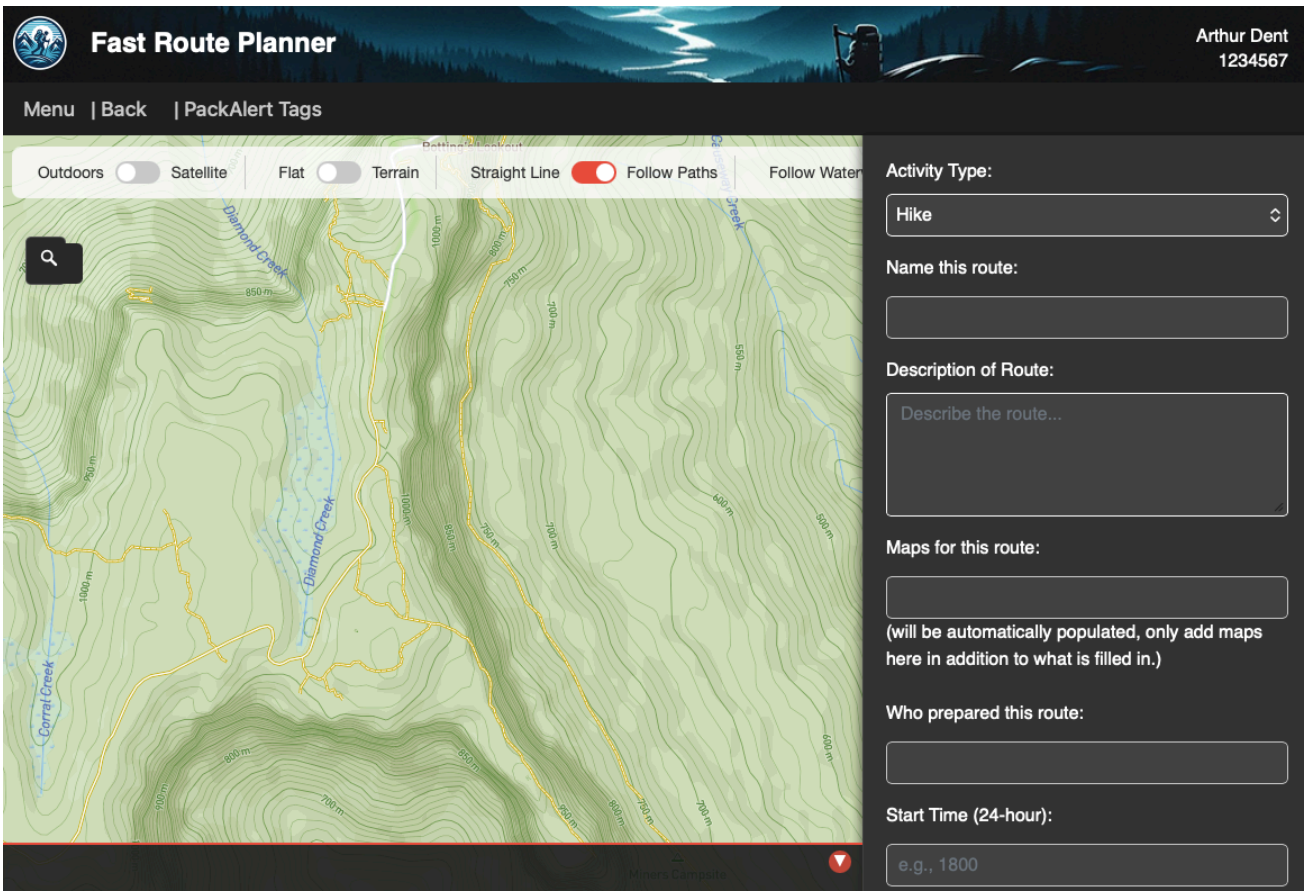
CHAPTER 23

Route Plan

This is where the rubber meets the road, your first real substantial part of planning.
Click the ‘View’ button to the right of Route Plan in the Journey Dashboard, then on the Route Dashboard, select ‘Add new Route Plan’



This opens up the Route Planner in a new tab.

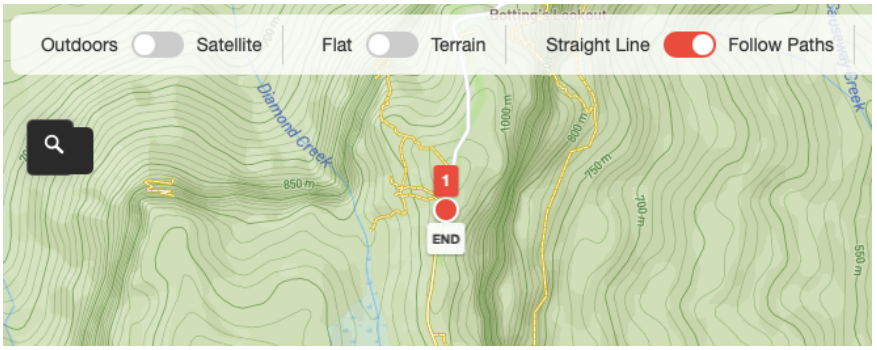


The magic of automatic Route Planning.

Mentors need to ensure that prior to embarking on this step with a Journey Leader, that they, the Journey Planner, understand all the manual working and knowledge in order to how to plan a route, prior to launching into the Logs Kept Simple Route Planning tool.
There is little to distinguish this tool from magic, you're going to LOVE it as someone that needs to produce these documents day in and day out, but the Journey Leader needs to understand the topics covered in Part One first.

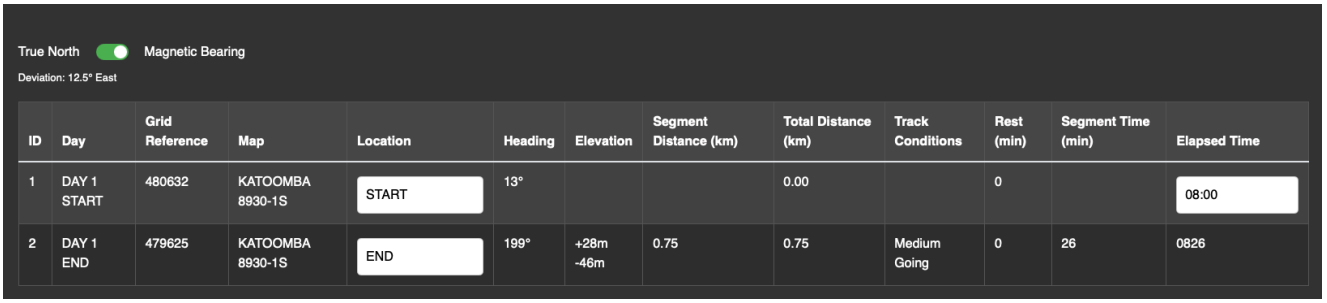
The simple Process

Once the route planner has loaded, use the mouse wheel to zoom in the map to the area of interest.
It's good practice to start by filling out the main details on the right hand panel.
Choose the activity type, Name the route, input who is preparing this route and then the start time in 24 hour time.
Now, it is simple as clicking on the first location point.



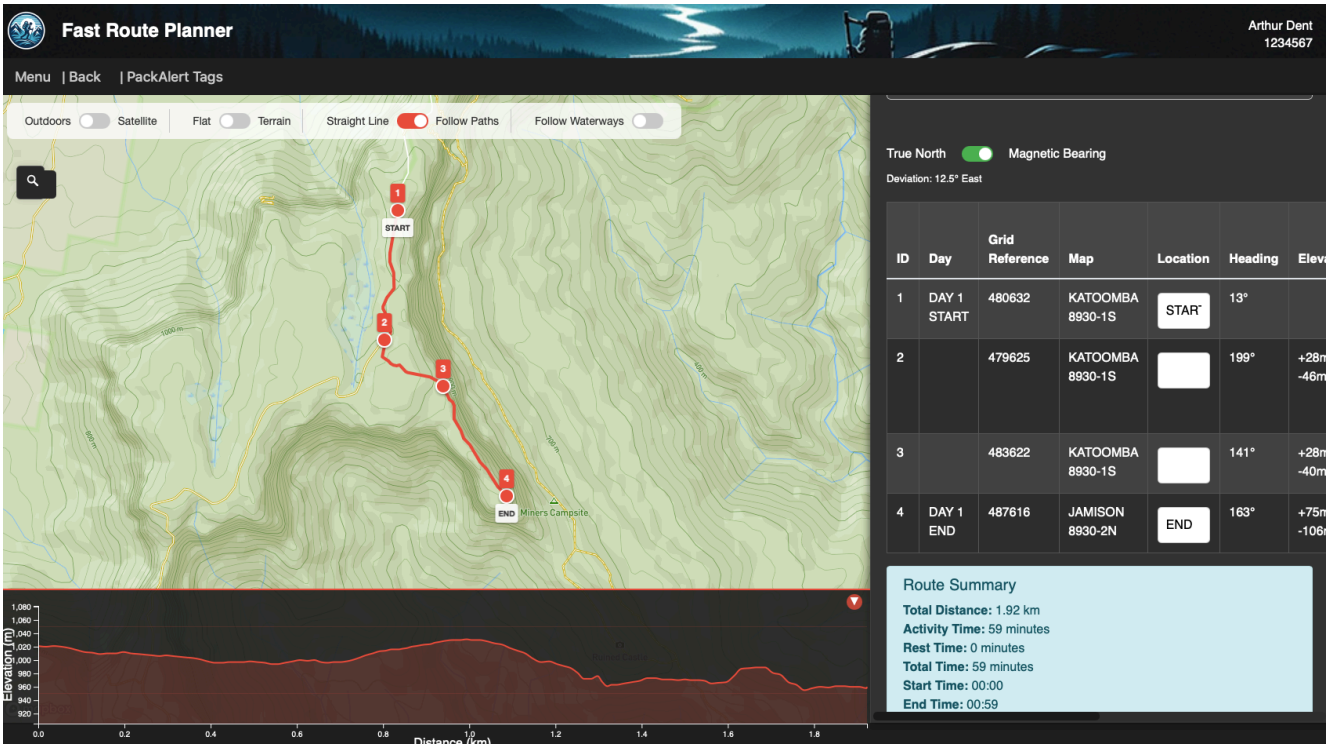
This point is added to the map, and the details added to the route plan table.
If you are following a track, you can now click the next waypoint on your Journey, however if this is this off-track, straight line, then change the toggle at the top be 'Straight line'.

Now that we have select more than one point, you can scroll down / across and see that there a partially covered up panel that has 'Expand' button.
This will give you the real magic.

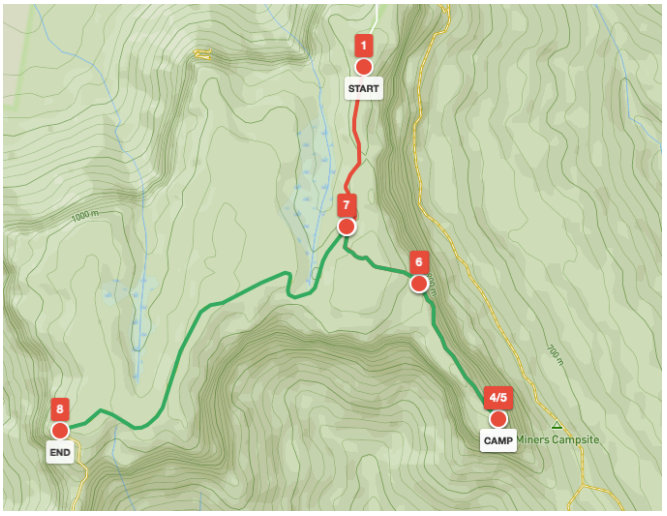


ID	Day	Grid Reference	Map	Location	Heading	Elevation	Segment Distance (km)	Total Distance (km)	Track Conditions	Rest (min)	Segment Time (min)	Elapsed Time
1	DAY 1 START	480632	KATOOMBA 8930-1S	START	13°			0.00		0		08:00
2	DAY 1 END	479625	KATOOMBA 8930-1S	END	199°	+28m -46m	0.75	0.75	Medium Going	0	26	0826

You can now see that we have Leg IDs, Day references, Grid Reference, Topo Map name, Heading, Elevation gain/loss, segment distance, total distance, track conditions, rest time, segment time and total time fields.
All, automatically populated.
At this point, you should adjust the Track Conditions to meet the reality of what the actual conditions are like. The elevation gain/loss, segment distance and track conditions all feed in to an advanced, augmented, Naismith's Rule calculator, the basis of which we learnt about in Part one, to give you a fairly accurate segment time number in minutes.
By changing the Track Conditions value you can see how this time is recalculated.



Continue adding your waypoints, descriptions and Track Conditions and build out the days route. When you reach the end of the day, click the 'Next Day' button and you will be ready to keep plotting. Behind the scenes the tool has closed off the Day one activity, allocated this as a Camp point and started the next day for you automatically.



ID	Day	Grid Reference	Map	Location	Heading	Elevation	Segment Distance (km)	Total Distance (km)
1	DAY 1 START	480632	KATOOMBA 8930-1S	START	13°			0.00
2		479625	KATOOMBA 8930-1S		199°	+28m -46m	0.75	0.75
3		483622	KATOOMBA 8930-1S		141°	+28m -40m	0.43	1.19
4	DAY 1 END	487616	JAMISON 8930-2N	END	163°	+75m -106m	0.73	1.92
		487616	JAMISON 8930-2N	CAMPSITE				
5	DAY 2 START	487616	JAMISON 8930-2N	START	163°			0.00
6		483622	KATOOMBA 8930-1S		343°	+107m -73m	0.74	0.74
7		479625	KATOOMBA 8930-1S		321°	+37m -28m	0.43	1.17
8	DAY 2 END	466615	JAMISON 8930-2N	END	248°	+107m -75m	1.65	2.82

Fill out as much information as you can for each leg of the journey, this all forms part of your Navigation Data Sheet. When you are done, and all info and timings are entered, under the table of Legs in the buttons section is 'Save Route'. This will save all your hard earned work for later.

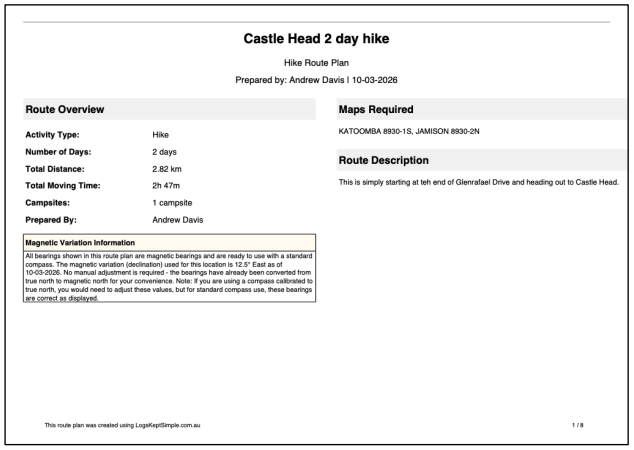
You can now close this window, after saving, and go back to the Journey Dashboard. It might need refreshing but when you do, you will then see the Route that you just saved.

Your Route Plans

Route Name	Activity Type	Maps	Prepared By	Start Time	Created	Approval Status	Actions
Castle Head 2 day hike	HIKE	KATOOMBA 8930-1S, JAMISON 8930-2N	Andrew Davis	0800	2026-03-10	Not Submitted	Edit View Map Download PDF Submit for Approval

From this point you can re-edit the Route Plan if you need to, view the map or download a PDF of your complete Journey. This is the entire route plan.

The Navigation Data Sheet, the maps, the daily summary, each leg, a map for each day and a data sheet for each day. The entire paperwork stack.



Castle Head 2 day hike

Hike Route Plan

Prepared by: Andrew Davis | 10-03-2026

Route Overview

Activity Type:	Hike
Number of Days:	2 days
Total Distance:	2.82 km
Total Moving Time:	2h 47m
Campsites:	1 campsite
Prepared By:	Andrew Davis

Magnetic Variation Information

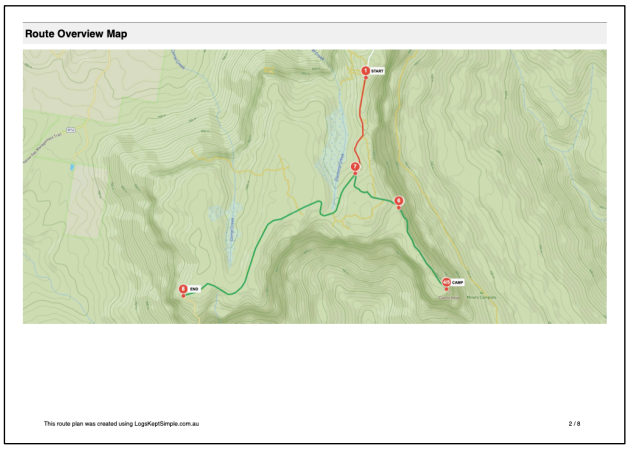
All bearings shown in this route plan are magnetic bearings and are ready to use with a standard compass. The magnetic variation (declination) used for this location is 12.5° East as of 10-03-2026. No manual adjustment is required - the bearings have already been converted from true north to magnetic north for your convenience. Note: If you are using a compass calibrated to true north, you would need to adjust these values, but for standard compass use, these bearings are correct as displayed.

Maps Required

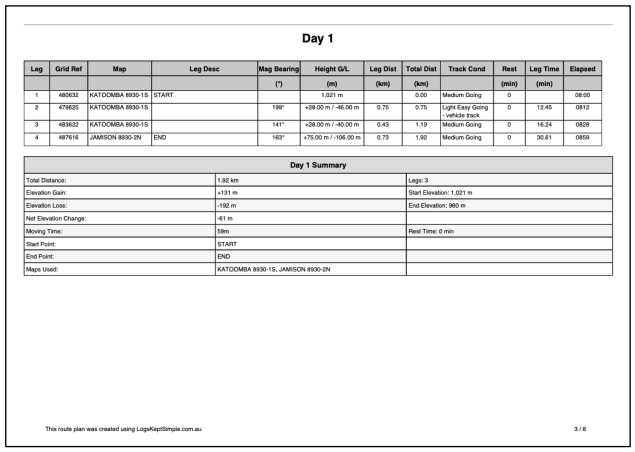
KATOOMBA 8930-1S, JAMISON 8930-2N

Route Description

This is simply starting at teh end of Glenrafael Drive and heading out to Castle Head.



Route Overview Map

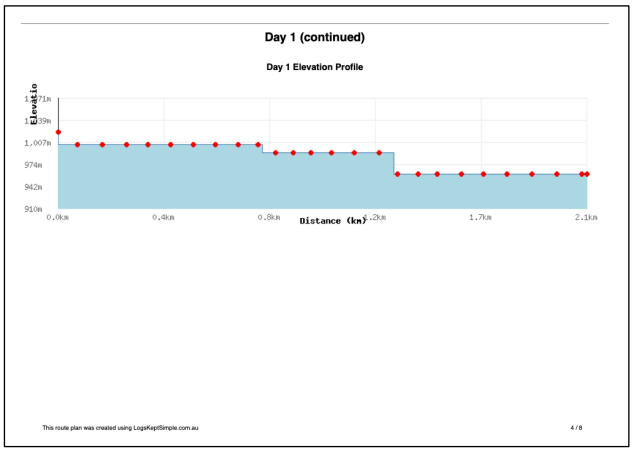


Day 1

Leg	Grid Ref	Map	Leg Desc	Mag Bearing (°)	Height G/L (m)	Leg Dist (km)	Total Dist (km)	Track Cond	Rest (min)	Leg Time (min)	Elapsed
1	480632	KATOOMBA 8930-1S	START		1,021 m		0.00	Medium Going	0		08:00
2	479625	KATOOMBA 8930-1S		199°	+28.00 m / -46.00 m	0.75	0.75	Light Easy Going - vehicle track	0	12.45	0812
3	483622	KATOOMBA 8930-1S		141°	+28.00 m / -46.00 m	0.43	1.19	Medium Going	0	16.24	0828
4	487616	JAMISON 8930-2N	END	163°	+75.00 m / -106.00 m	0.73	1.92	Medium Going	0	30.61	0859

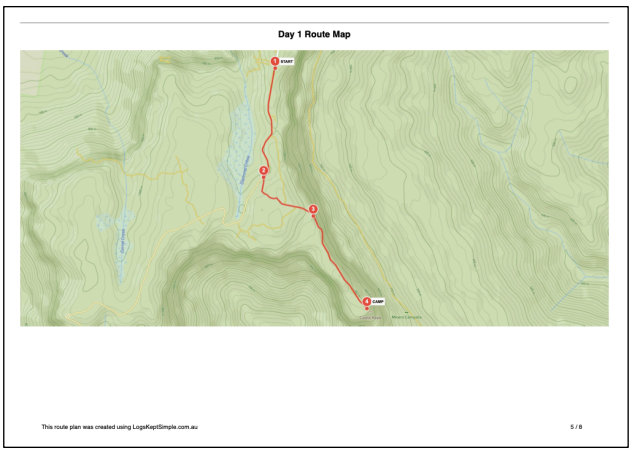
Day 1 Summary

Total Distance:	1.92 km	Legs: 3
Elevation Gain:	+131 m	Start Elevation: 1,021 m
Elevation Loss:	-192 m	End Elevation: 960 m
Net Elevation Change:	-61 m	
Moving Time:	59m	Rest Time: 0 min
Start Point:	START	
End Point:	END	
Maps Used:	KATOOMBA 8930-1S, JAMISON 8930-2N	

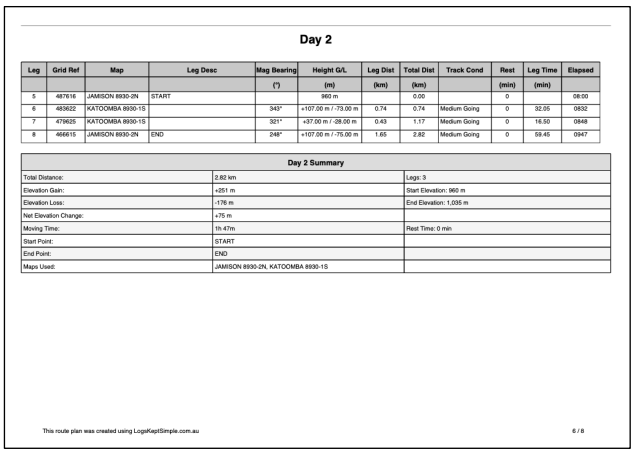


Day 1 (continued)

Day 1 Elevation Profile



Day 1 Route Map

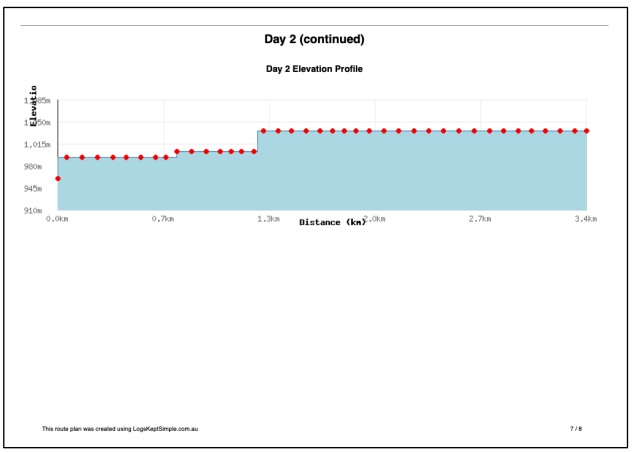


Day 2

Leg	Grid Ref	Map	Leg Desc	Mag Bearing (°)	Height G/L (m)	Leg Dist (km)	Total Dist (km)	Track Cond	Rest (min)	Leg Time (min)	Elapsed
5	487616	JAMISON 8930-2N	START		960 m		0.00		0		08:00
6	483622	KATOOMBA 8930-1S		343°	+107.00 m / -73.00 m	0.74	0.74	Medium Going	0	32.05	0832
7	479625	KATOOMBA 8930-1S		321°	+37.00 m / -28.00 m	0.43	1.17	Medium Going	0	16.50	0848
8	466615	JAMISON 8930-2N	END	248°	+107.00 m / -75.00 m	1.65	2.82	Medium Going	0	59.45	0947

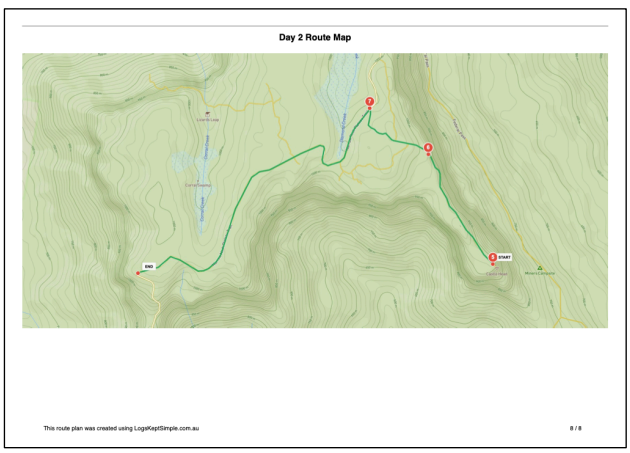
Day 2 Summary

Total Distance:	2.82 km	Legs: 3
Elevation Gain:	+251 m	Start Elevation: 960 m
Elevation Loss:	-176 m	End Elevation: 1,035 m
Net Elevation Change:	+75 m	
Moving Time:	1h 47m	Rest Time: 0 min
Start Point:	START	
End Point:	END	
Maps Used:	JAMISON 8930-2N, KATOOMBA 8930-1S	



Day 2 (continued)

Day 2 Elevation Profile



Day 2 Route Map

Steps to Complete

- Once you are happy with the route plan and want to get feedback from your Mentor/Guide, from the Route Plan dashboard click the ‘Submit for Approval’ button and fill out the approval form. The PDF of your route plan will be emailed to your Mentor/Guide for comment/approval and you will be emailed confirmation.

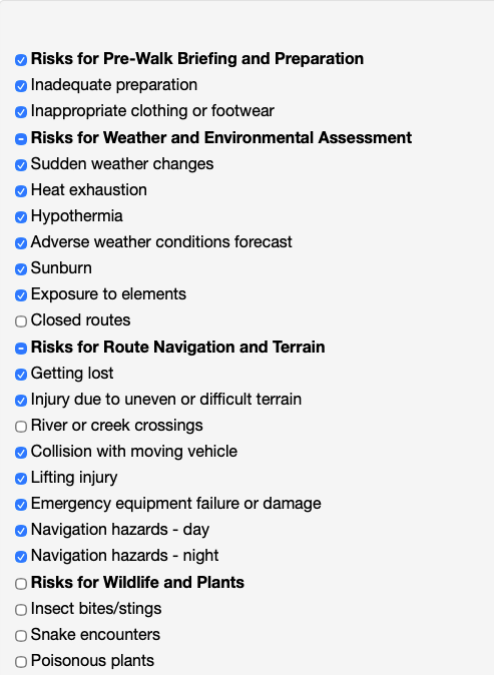
- Generate and store the route PDF, then submit for approval from the Route Plans list.
- Keep route naming consistent with your risk assessment and trip intention records.
- Use the built-in Grid Reference Checker to validate all manual grid references before submission.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Journey Leaders need to learn how to perform this entire step manually and be able to read/follow a paper form / map, before they use any ‘short cuts’

> **PITFALL** Don’t forget to change the Track Conditions from the default or the Naismith’s based timings wont be accurate.

Risk Assessment

From the Journey Dashboard, select the 'View' button for Risk Assessment.
This will open up the Risk Assessment dashboard showing you any risk assessments that you have saved.
Click 'Create New Risk Assessment to start a new document.
From the Risk Assessment tool page, there is a list of basic activities to choose from. Bike Riding, Camping, Paddling, Bushwalking's etc. Choose the one, or many, that best describe the activity.



Fill out the core details about the activity then scroll down to see the pre-built base hazard assessment items.
Choose those that are applicable for this activity.
Only the selected items will be present in the saved Risk Assessment, so this is the first stage in reviewing and working out what the hazards are.

You will note that Tasks are the bold items and the Hazards are linked to them.
Select the Task that is appropriate and all associated Hazards will also be selected, however you can de-select any Hazard not considered to be active.

Click the 'Generate Risk Assessment' to build the assessment out.

Risk Assessment for Bushwalk

Activity:	Bushwalk
Assessed By:	Arthur Dent
Consulted:	Andrew Davis
Group, Site, or Event Name:	Castle Head Hike
Date:	2026-03-10
Leader in Charge or Manager's Name:	

Task	Hazard	Risk Level (Pre-Mitigation)	Mitigation Steps	Mitigation Equipment	Risk Level (Post-Mitigation)	Person Responsible	Actions
Pre-Walk Briefing and Preparation	Inadequate preparation	MEDIUM (Possible - Moderate)	Conduct an in-depth pre-walk briefing; Discuss route, duration, rules, expectations, and safety protocols; Brief group on appropriate behaviour in presence of wildlife; Check NPWS and council alerts for track closures or hazards prior to departure; Undertake GO/NO-GO review prior to departure	Navigation Data Sheet Briefing Pack	LOW (Unlikely - Minor)	Activity Leader	Edit
	Inappropriate clothing or footwear	MEDIUM (Possible - Moderate)	Check participant gear; Recommend proper clothing, boots, and weather-appropriate attire		LOW (Unlikely - Minor)	Activity Leader	Edit
	Sudden weather changes	HIGH (Possible - Major)	Monitor weather forecast; Carry weather-appropriate gear; Plan for safe shelters Identify evacuation routes en-route; Identify refuge points	Raincoats Tarp Emergency Blankets	MEDIUM (Unlikely - Moderate)	Activity Leader	Edit
	Heat exhaustion	HIGH (Possible -	Plan regular rest stops; Hydration plan;	Water Bottles	LOW (Unlikely -	Activity Leader	Edit

Steps to Complete

- Select or create an assessment specific to this journey from the Risk Assessments library.
- Once you are happy with the risk assessment and want to get feedback from your Mentor/Guide, from the Risk Assessment dashboard click the ‘Submit for Approval’ button and fill out the approval form. The PDF of your risk assessment will be emailed to your Mentor/Guide for comment/approval and you will be emailed confirmation.

- Use controls that are observable and testable: briefings, checkpoints, weather thresholds, and role assignments.
- Ensure risk wording matches your route reality - terrain, season, participant capability, and likely emergency profile.
- Generate a PDF and submit for approval.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Work through the hierarchy of controls: eliminate, substitute, engineer, administer, PPE. Tailor to Australian standards from Safe Work Australia.

> **PITFALL** Generic controls such as 'take care' or 'be mindful' are not auditable and will not pass mentor review.

CHAPTER 25

Meal Plan

How to Complete Your Menu Plan

Start by giving your menu plan a name in the field at the top left, something simple like "Grampians Hike Menu" works fine.

Enter your group details

Under the Inputs section, enter the number of attendees and the number of days your journey runs. Once both are filled in, click Generate Days. This will populate the Menu Plan table with a row for each day, ready for you to fill in.

Fill in your meals

For each row in the Menu Plan table, work across the columns:

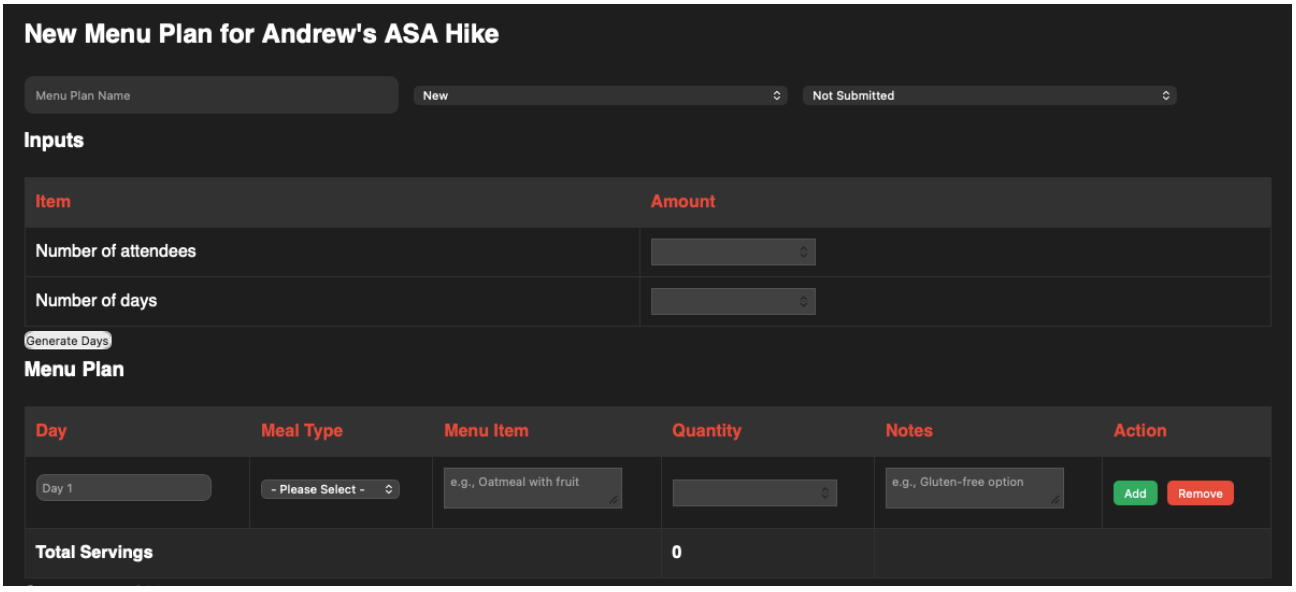
Day - pre-filled based on your number of days
Meal Type - select Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, or Snack from the dropdown
Menu Item - describe the meal, for example Oatmeal with dried fruit or Pasta with tomato sauce
Quantity - enter the total serve count for that item
Notes - use this for anything important, such as allergen information, preparation requirements, or substitutions for dietary needs

To add additional meals for the same day (for example, both lunch and dinner), click the Add button on that row. To remove a row you no longer need, click Remove.

Check your totals

The Total Servings count at the bottom updates as you add rows. Use this to cross-check that every participant is accounted for across every meal before you submit.

When your plan is complete, save, return to the dashboard and click to Submitted for Approval.



Steps to Complete

- Generate day rows, then complete meal type, menu item, quantity, and notes for each entry.
- Check summary totals and total servings for realism, then save to generate PDF.
- Submit for approval once complete.

STRONG PRACTICE Add allergy-safe alternatives in notes and verify total energy intake matches the intensity of each day.

PITFALL Completing the meal plan without a corresponding water plan. Document water sources, requirements, and purification method alongside meals - they are inseparable in the field.

CHAPTER 26

Transport Plan

How to Complete Your Transport Plan

Start by giving your plan a name in the Transport Plan Name field, something like Base Camp Transport – March 2026. Use the Notes field for anything that doesn't fit neatly elsewhere, such as special instructions, contingency arrangements, or context for your mentor.

The form is divided into three phases: Outbound, In-Field, and Return. Complete each section that applies to your journey.

For each phase, fill in:

Assembly Point - where the group gathers before moving, including the specific location such as a gate number or car park name

Departure Time - include the date as well as the time

Destination - where this phase ends

Expected Arrival - your estimated arrival time at the destination

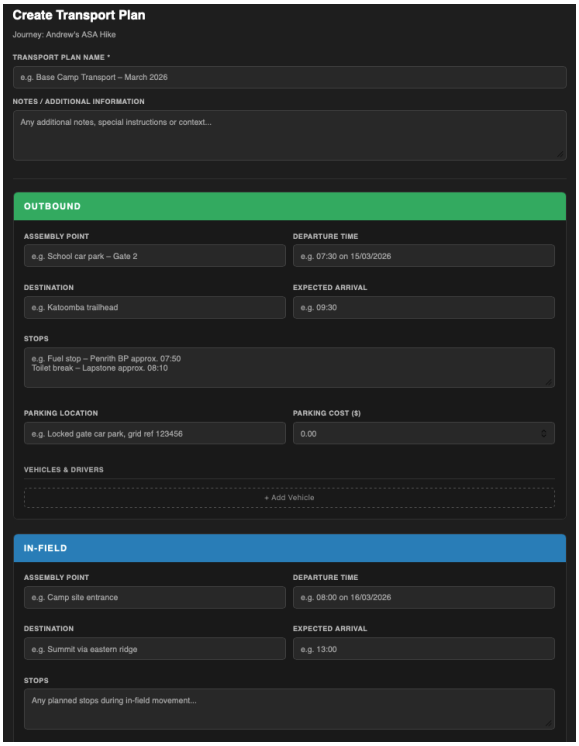
Stops - list any planned stops along the way, with location and approximate time

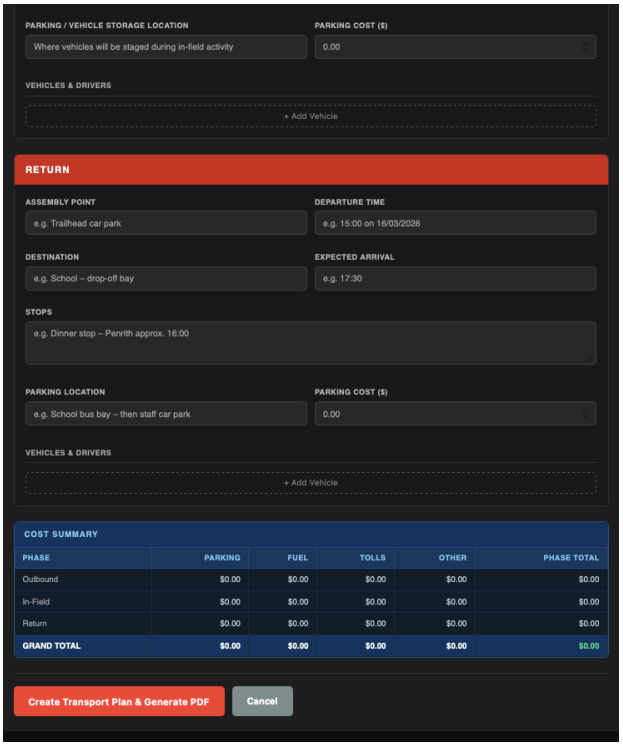
Parking Location - where vehicles will be left during this phase, including a grid reference for remote locations

Parking Cost - enter the expected cost, or leave at $0.00 if none applies

Vehicles and Drivers - Click + Add Vehicle within each phase to record the vehicles and drivers for that leg. Every vehicle should have a named, confirmed driver assigned before submission. Do not leave this section empty, unconfirmed transport is one of the most common planning gaps.

Cost Summary - The Cost Summary table at the bottom automatically totals your parking, fuel, tolls, and other costs across all three phases. Fill in costs as you complete each section and use the Grand Total as your input into the journey budget.





Steps to Complete

- Name the plan clearly and add a concise description.
- When you are happy with the content, save, return to dashboard and submit for approval.

- Document all movement legs, vehicle assumptions, timing windows, and named driver responsibilities.
- Save to generate PDF and submit for approval.

STRONG PRACTICE Include separation controls for delayed vehicle scenarios and a pickup fallback plan. Verify all drivers are confirmed before submission, not after.

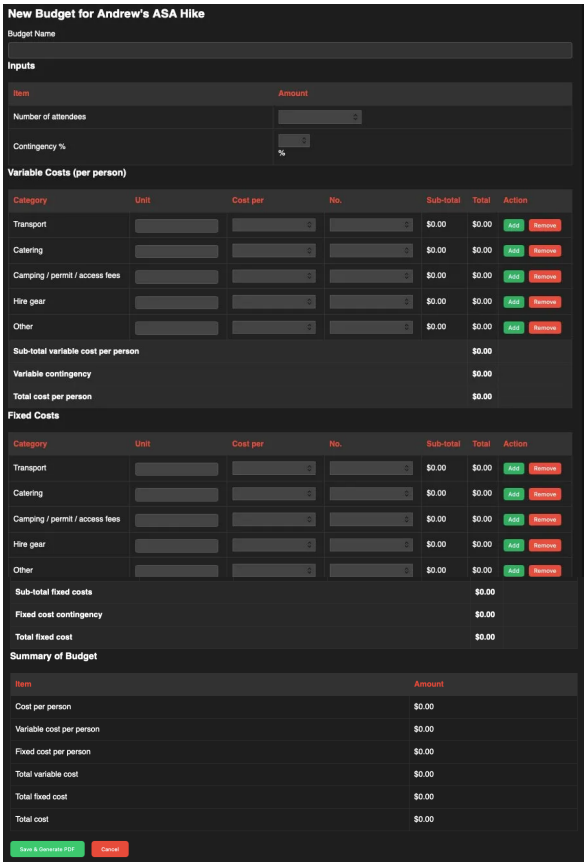
PITFALL Overloading vehicles. Adhere to passenger capacity and confirm every participant has a seat with a seatbelt.

CHAPTER 27

Budgets

How to Complete Your Budget

Start by giving your budget a name in the Budget Name field. Under Inputs, enter the number of attendees and your contingency percentage. A contingency of 10% is a reasonable starting point for most journeys, this is applied automatically to your variable costs and acts as a buffer for unexpected expenses.
The budget is divided into two sections: Variable Costs and Fixed Costs.
Variable Costs are expenses that scale with the number of participants, transport per person, catering, camping or permit fees, and gear hire. For each category, enter the unit description, the cost per unit, and the number of units. The form calculates the sub-total and total automatically. Use the Add button to include additional line items within a category, and Remove to delete any that don't apply.
Fixed Costs work the same way but are for expenses that do not change regardless of group size, a bus hire fee is the same whether eight or twelve participants attend. Enter these separately so the summary can correctly calculate the per-person split.
Every line item needs a source. Do not estimate from memory or use figures from previous journeys. Look up current prices, get quotes, and check booking websites. A budget built on real numbers is a planning document. A budget built on guesses is not.



Summary of Budget

The Summary at the bottom automatically calculates your variable cost per person, fixed cost per person, total variable cost, total fixed cost, and overall total cost. Check these figures carefully before submission, the per-person total is what participants and families will be quoted, so it needs to be accurate.
When complete, click Save & Generate PDF to produce a submission-ready version of your budget.

Steps to Complete

- Complete attendees and contingency percentage first.

- Fill variable and fixed cost rows by category: transport, catering, permit or access, hire gear, other.
- Verify subtotals, contingency impact, per-person figures, and total cost.
- Save and generate PDF, then submit for approval.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Research real costs, not memory or last year's figures. Transport and permit costs change year to year.

> **PITFALL** Underestimating transport and permit costs, then absorbing late increases without a contingency buffer already in place.

CHAPTER 28

Activity Plan

The Create New Activity Plan page allows Users to build a detailed, structured plan for an adventurous activity. It covers everything from the activity concept and safety procedures through to equipment lists, leadership roles, and approvals. Plans can be created from scratch or based on a previously saved route.

At the very top of the page you will see a row of checkboxes labelled:
Bushwalking
Paddling
Vertical
Camping
Pioneering
Cycling
Archery
Aquatics

Tick the checkbox(es) that match your activity type. This filters the relevant content and saved text snippets that appear later in the form.

💡 Tip: You can tick more than one category if your activity spans multiple disciplines (e.g. Bushwalking + Camping for an overnight hike).

The dropdown labelled "Choose a Saved Route Plan" lets you load a previously saved route. Selecting a route will:
Automatically populate the Activity Name field with the route name and the Location and route and timings fields down further.

If you are creating a completely new activity, leave this set to -- Select -- and fill in the details manually.

Type the name of your activity in the Activity Name field. This is the title that will appear on the plan. If you selected a saved route in Step 2, this field will already be filled in for you, you can edit it if needed.

Complete all the fields with as much information as you can.
NOTE: Under the fields there are some pre-made options based on the tick box types that you selected at the top, click include or type your own.

The Emergency Plan section has a button to popup a hospital and police station search, select those to add to the document.
The Weather Plan section has an ‘Add Weather’ function that allows you to search for weather information up to 10 days in advance, and to include this data in the plan.

Steps to Complete

- Open the Activity Plans section and create a new plan linked to your journey.

- Select your Route Plan to pre-fill Route Data.
- Assign participant roles and note any specific medical or capability considerations.
- Record the field emergency procedure: who does what, in what order, with what communications.
- Generate PDF and submit for approval.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** The activity plan should be readable by someone who was not involved in planning it. Write it for the person who may need to execute it under stress.

> **PITFALL** Copying the same generic activity plan across multiple journeys. Controls and procedures must reflect the specific route, terrain, and participant group for this journey.

CHAPTER 29

Consent

Consent Documents

Each journey plan has its own Consent Documents page, where Users can upload the sent out consent form for that specific activity. These documents are submitted as PDF files and are reviewed and approved by your mentor and guide before the activity proceeds.

To upload a consent form, click the Upload New Document button and select the relevant PDF from your device. Once uploaded, your documents will appear under the Consent section. The Approval History section tracks the review status of each document, showing when it was approved and by whom. If no documents have been uploaded yet, both sections will display a placeholder message until files are added.

Steps to Complete

- Use your organisation's consent process (Operoo or equivalent) aligned to the journey details in LogsKeptSimple.com.au.

- Confirm that consent forms reference the specific route, activity type, risks, and physical demands documented in your planning.
- Record evidence of consent in the journey record before submitting for final approval.
- Do not proceed if any participant's consent is outstanding.

> **PITFALL** Sending consent before the risk assessment is finalised. If the risks change, the consent must be re-obtained.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Consent is not a signature on a generic permission slip. The consent form must describe the actual demands and risks of this journey so that participants and guardians are genuinely informed.

CHAPTER 30

Trip Intention and ANS

Field	Description
Trip Intention	Use the Trip Intention action in LogsKeptSimple.com.au, then complete the external NPWS form with matching journey details.
ANS	Close Activity Notification System requirements with the same assumptions used in approvals.

Steps to Complete

- Use the Trip Intention action in LogsKeptSimple.com.au, then complete the external NPWS form with matching journey details.

- Store confirmation evidence - a screenshot or reference number - in your journey records before departure.
- Complete ANS requirements and confirm all notifications to families, leadership, and land managers have been sent.
- Close remaining operational items with the same assumptions used in approvals.

> **STRONG PRACTICE** Include PLB and EPIRB details in the trip intention. Test all comms devices before departure and confirm the base contact has received the full transport plan.

> **PITFALL** Marking trip intention as complete in the workflow without keeping evidence of the actual external lodgement. The lodgement confirmation, not the workflow tick, is the record that matters.

CHAPTER 31

Glossary and Key References

Term	Definition
ANS	Activity Notification System. Used to notify relevant parties of planned outdoor activities.
BOM	Bureau of Meteorology. Australia's primary weather authority. Use at bom.gov.au for forecasts, radar, warnings, and seasonal outlooks.
LogsKeptSimple.com.au	The digital platform for managing journey planning, approvals, and activity documentation. Built by Andrew Davis, Blue Mountains NSW. Visit www.logskeptsimple.com.au.
Naismith's Rule	A formula for estimating hiking time: 1 hour per 5km horizontal distance plus 1 hour per 600m ascent. Adjust for rough terrain.
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service. The authority for national park access, trip intentions, and permits in NSW and other states.
Operoo	A digital consent and communications platform used by many Scout groups for participant management.
PLB	Personal Locator Beacon. An emergency signalling device that transmits your location to rescue services when activated. Registration is mandatory in Australia.
RFS	NSW Rural Fire Service. Provides fire danger ratings and bush fire alerts at rfs.nsw.gov.au.
UTM	Universal Transverse Mercator. A coordinate system used for precise grid references on topographic maps.

Plan well, lead safely, and keep good records. LogsKeptSimple.com.au exists to make all three a little easier.

APPENDIX A - PLANNING CHECKLISTS

One checklist per planning element. Print, work through, tick off. Every item should be completed before the plan is submitted for approval. If an item can't be ticked, it needs to be resolved - not skipped.

JOURNEY OVERVIEW		
Item	**Detail / Notes**	**Tick**
Journey type	*Overnight camp / multi-day / expedition / day journey*	☐
Dates	*Departure and return dates confirmed*	☐
Purpose	*Educational objectives defined and documented*	☐
Participant list	*All participants named; relevant needs (medical, dietary) noted*	☐
Mentor identified	*Name, contact details, role confirmed*	☐
Guide identified	*Name, qualifications, contact details confirmed*	☐
Mentor engaged	*First planning conversation has occurred - not just identified*	☐

ROUTE PLAN		
Item	**Detail / Notes**	**Tick**
Maps obtained	*Current 1:25,000 topo maps for all areas*	☐
Start and end points	*Grid references documented*	☐
All waypoints plotted	*Named and referenced on map*	☐
Legs documented	*Distance, bearing, terrain type for each leg*	☐
Timings calculated	*Naismith's Rule applied for each leg*	☐
Elevation profile	*Total ascent and descent documented*	☐
Water sources	*Sources identified per leg; marked on map*	☐
Alternative route	*At least one alternative documented with trigger condition*	☐
Route reviewed by mentor	*Capability match confirmed*	☐

RISK ASSESSMENT		
Item	**Detail / Notes**	**Tick**
Hazards identified	*All environments and activities reviewed*	☐
Hazards are route-specific	*Not copied from a template*	☐
Likelihood rated A–E	*Using the 5×5 matrix*	☐
Consequence rated 1–5	*Using the 5×5 matrix*	☐
Controls assigned	*Each control has a responsible person*	☐
Controls are specific	*Not "participants will be briefed on safe behaviour"*	☐
Residual risk assessed	*Risk rating after controls applied*	☐
No Extreme residual risks	*Or route/activity modified to resolve*	☐
High residual risks	*Explicitly approved by mentor with controls documented*	☐
Reviewed by mentor	*Technical soundness confirmed*	☐

MEAL & WATER PLAN		
Item	**Detail / Notes**	**Tick**
Calorie targets set	*Per person per day based on activity level*	☐
Meals planned	*Every meal for every day for every participant*	☐
Dietary requirements	*All restrictions and allergies accommodated*	☐
Pre-departure food check	*Scheduled for T-48 hours*	☐
Emergency food	*One extra day allocated and specified (not verbal instruction)*	☐
Water sources	*Identified for each leg of the route*	☐
Daily quantities	*Calculated per person based on conditions*	☐
Purification method	*Filter / chemical treatment / boiling - confirmed and carried*	☐
Carry capacity	*Adequate to bridge distance between sources*	☐
Contingency	*Plan if a source is dry or contaminated*	☐

TRANSPORT PLAN		
Item	**Detail / Notes**	**Tick**
All phases documented	*Outbound, in-field (if applicable), and return legs all listed*	☐
Drivers named	*Actual names - not "volunteer TBC"*	☐
Vehicles confirmed appropriate	*Seats with seatbelts for all passengers; gear fits; road type suitable*	☐
Passengers assigned	*Who travels in which vehicle - documented before departure day*	☐
Departure times set	*Confirmed for each leg with expected arrival times*	☐
Parking location	*Trailhead/exit point with grid reference*	☐
Breakdown plan	*Who to call, where to wait, fallback if repair takes too long*	☐
Missed pickup plan	*What drivers do if the group is late returning from the trail*	☐
Meeting point documented	*Agreed point if vehicles are separated or contact is lost*	☐
Base contact named	*Person who receives safe-return message and knows the trigger time*	☐
Drivers briefed	*Every driver has read the plan before departure day*	☐

BUDGET		
Item	**Detail / Notes**	**Tick**
All costs identified	*Transport, permits, food, equipment, communications*	☐
Costs researched	*Current prices - not memory or last year's figures*	☐
Source documented	*Every line item has a reference*	☐
Contingency applied	*10–20% buffer*	☐
Per-person total calculated	*Including contingency*	☐
Communicated to families	*Before the journey is confirmed*	☐
Approved by mentor	*Budget is realistic and complete*	☐

ACTIVITY PLAN		
Item	**Detail / Notes**	**Tick**
Supervision ratios	*Documented for each activity type*	☐
Participant roles	*Assigned and briefed*	☐
Daily schedule	*Activity sequence with timings*	☐
Group management strategy	*How the group is managed on-trail*	☐
Field emergency procedures	*Specific to this journey and terrain*	☐
Aligned with risk assessment	*Every high-risk activity has a corresponding RA entry*	☐

CONSENT		
Item	**Detail / Notes**	**Tick**
Consent forms distributed	*At least 10 days before departure*	☐
All forms returned	*No outstanding consents on departure day*	☐
Youth participants	*Parent or guardian consent obtained*	☐
Adult participants	*Direct consent obtained*	☐
Route and risks communicated	*Not just a signature - individuals understand demands*	☐
Medical information captured	*Any new information since last journey*	☐
Records stored	*Accessible offline during the journey*	☐

TRIP INTENTION		
Item	**Detail / Notes**	**Tick**
NPWS (or relevant authority) notified	*Trip intention lodged*	☐
Route details included	*Start/end points, route description, dates*	☐
Group details included	*Size, leader name and contact*	☐
Vehicle details included	*Registration, colour, parking location*	☐
Emergency contacts included	*Names and phone numbers*	☐
Trigger time set	*Time at which SAR should be activated if no check-in*	☐
Confirmation evidence stored	*Reference number or email kept offline*	☐
Emergency contacts briefed	*They know the trigger time and what to do*	☐

NOTIFICATIONS		
Item	**Detail / Notes**	**Tick**
Families notified	*Final route, dates, contact details, emergency procedures*	☐
Organisation leadership notified	*As required by your organisation*	☐
Land managers notified	*Where required for your specific area*	☐
Local emergency services	*Where required or recommended*	☐
Notification records kept	*Who was notified, when, and how*	☐

WEATHER PLAN		
Item	**Detail / Notes**	**Tick**
Seasonal patterns researched	*BOM historical data for the area and month*	☐
Go/no-go thresholds defined	*Specific numbers - not "if conditions are bad"*	☐
Thresholds agreed with mentor	*During planning, not at the trailhead*	☐
Monitoring schedule set	*When and how often to check forecasts*	☐
Offline tools prepared	*Printed synoptic chart; downloaded forecasts*	☐
Group briefed on thresholds	*Participants and emergency contacts know the criteria*	☐
Fire danger checked	*RFS district rating checked morning of departure and each day*	☐
Final check completed	*BOM, Windy, and RFS checked within 24 hours of departure*	☐

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST	
Item	**Done**
Route Plan approved and latest version shared	☐
Risk Assessment approved with controls briefed	☐
Menu Plan approved and dietary risks managed	☐
Water Plan confirmed, sources, purification method, and carry capacity verified	☐
Transport Plan approved and owners confirmed	☐
Budget approved and financial assumptions current	☐
Trip Intention lodged and evidence stored	☐
Activity Plan, Consent, and ANS aligned to final plan	☐
Weather and fire conditions checked against go/no-go thresholds (BOM/ RFS)	☐
Emergency contacts, comms plan, and fallback transport confirmed	☐
Mentor and guide final sign-off completed	☐
Equipment checked and packed	☐
Participant briefings completed	☐