



# Bushwalking Handbook (Day Hikes)

## OAS 1-3

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The youtube channel "Lotsafreshair" <https://www.youtube.com/c/Lotsafreshair> has lots of useful and relevant short videos which you may like to view.

## Being Prepared

### Knowing where you can and can't go

Before you go on any bushwalk or hike you should know where you are going and how to get there. This means reading the activity plan you are given and looking at any maps provided.

Places you can go:

- National Parks
- State Forests
- State and Regional Parks

Can go with restrictions: (these are all subject to qualification requirements)

- Above the snowline in winter
- Deserts
- Remote areas

Cannot go:

- Private property
- Water catchment areas
- Reference areas
- Revegetation areas


### Australian Walking Track Grading system

There is a national grading system for walking tracks and National Parks use this to tell us how hard the walk will be, this is freely available on their websites. For more information you can see


<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/safety/bushwalking-safety/australian-walking-track-grading-system>

Most of their walks will come with a grade, and if you click on that link it will give you more details so you can decide if you will be able to complete the walk, that it is within your skill and fitness level.

Little Forest walking track in Morton National Park is a very short, easy walking track with great opportunities for birdwatching and learning about local wildlife.

<b>Where</b>	<a href="#">Morton National Park in South Coast, Country NSW</a>
<b>Distance</b>	1.5km return
<b>Time suggested</b>	15 - 45min
<b>Grade</b>	 <b>Grade 3</b>
<b>Entry fees</b>	Park entry fees apply at Fitzroy Falls and in the Bundanoon area of the park
<b>What to bring</b>	Drinking water, hat, sunscreen

### Track grading

 **Grade 3** [Learn more about the grading system](#)

#### Features of this track

<b>Distance</b> 1.5km return	<b>Time</b> 15 - 45min	<b>Quality of markings</b> Clearly sign posted	<b>Experience required</b> Some bushwalking experience recommended
<b>Gradient</b> Gentle hills	<b>Steps</b> Many steps	<b>Quality of path</b> Formed track, some obstacles	

Take a look at our guide below, and before your next adventure ask yourself 'is this walk suitable for me?'



Grade 1

No bushwalking experience required. Flat even surface with no steps or steep sections. Suitable for wheelchair users who have someone to assist them. Walks no greater than 5km.



## Grade 2

No bushwalking experience required. The track is hardened or compacted surface and may have a gentle hill section or sections and occasional steps. Walks no greater than 10km.



## Grade 3

Suitable for most ages and fitness levels. Some bushwalking experience recommended. Tracks may have short steep hill sections a rough surface and many steps. Walks up to 20km.



## Grade 4

Bushwalking experience recommended. Tracks may be long, rough and very steep. Directional signage may be limited.



## Grade 5

Very experienced bushwalkers with specialised skills, including navigation and emergency first aid. Tracks are likely to be very rough, very steep and unmarked. Walks may be more than 20km.

### Qualifications

As a participant you do not need any qualifications to go on day hikes up to and including grade 3, you need to be OAS stage 3 to go on grade 4 hikes, or grade 2/3 hikes if you are walking in the dark.

See <https://nsw.scouts.com.au/adventurous-activities/plan-activity/> to find out what qualifications the leader needs to run an activity, at the time of writing this they need “Safe Participant” to lead day hikes up to and including grade 3, and “Trained Participant” to lead hikes on grade 3 with an overnight camp (not walking at night). They need further qualifications to lead on grade 4 or night hikes on grade 2/3.

### Weather and Conditions

Leading up to the day, and on the day, you need to know what the weather is like so you know what to wear and what to pack, or if it should be cancelled for safety reasons. The Bureau of Meteorology website <http://www.bom.gov.au/> or apps like “Willy weather” are some good places to check, along with local newspapers or websites.

### Letting people know

You should always tell someone who is staying behind where you are going (including a copy of your activity plan, and maps) and when you expect to be home – including how long they should wait before they start to worry, and who to call at that point. This will normally be the emergency contact on the activity plan.

A communication device like your mobile phone is good to be able to reach out in an emergency, or just to let people know you are running late or if plans change. Most phones also have gps and compass apps you can use to navigate, but the battery can run out with constant use.

## What to wear/pack

"How to pack for a day hike" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay73RVOX2O0&t=344s>

Always check what the expected weather conditions are as a starting point, this will tell you how many layers you may need, if very cold you may need more than 3 layers possibly even gloves and beanie.

You also need to have the appropriate equipment including for if the weather changes or if you have to stay out longer than expected.

Make sure you are sun safe with collars and long sleeves or sunscreen. Always wear a wide brim hat to keep the sun off, you can add a beanie if cold.

Dressing in layers is best so that you can easily add or remove them during the day as conditions change, there is nothing worse than being either too hot or too cold to turn an enjoyable walk into a horrible experience. The layers you are not currently wearing should be packed in your bag.

In general, there are 3 types of layers.



### Base layer



This is what you wear next to your skin, it should be wicking so that the moisture is pulled away from your skin if you sweat or get wet, to stop you getting too cold.

An active ware or quick dry sports fabric is a good choice. This is usually what your school sports polos are made of (not cotton) and should also have a collar to keep you sun safe. If it is really cold you can wear a singlet or merino t-shirt underneath, or even a thermal top.

- Nylon: dries quickly, but not very breathable and can be hot
- Polyester: dries quickly, can be hot
- Cotton: suitable for summer but becomes very cold when wet.
- Denim: heavy, cold when wet. Not a suitable outdoor fabric.
- Wool: retains warmth when wet, but base layer can be expensive

### Mid layer – Warm clothing

Even on a hot day you should carry something for a cold change or in case you are out later than expected. This is a jumper or long-sleeved shirt in wool or fleece, something to keep you warm.

- Softshell: resists light rain
- Fleece: warm but can be bulky. Durable.
- Woolen jumper: warm even when wet, can be bulky.



### Outer layer – Wet weather gear



This is your raincoat to protect you if it rains or gets windy. You need to at least cover your top half; rain pants are a good idea if wet weather is expected.

A packable raincoat should always be in your hiking bag no matter what the expected weather conditions, it can also provide warmth if you forget your jumper

### Pants

It is best to wear long pants to protect your legs from the sun and any plants you walk through. If you choose to wear shorts you need to have long socks and preferably “gaiters” (google it if you don’t know what these are).

Most hiking pants are made from lightweight quick dry fabric. Jeans are too heavy, and get very cold when wet. Some hiking pants let you zip off the bottoms so you can make them into shorts for when crossing rivers or in really wet conditions.

The quick dry school sports trackpants (not cotton) would also make good hiking pants.



### Footwear

You need sturdy shoes with a good sole when hiking. Sneakers are appropriate, or a hiking boot if you need extra support around your ankles.

### Food or snacks

Pack at least 1 extra meal than you expect to eat in case you get extra hungry from all the exercise or are out longer than expected. This can be a muesli/protein bar or trail mix on a day hike.

### Water

You should have at least 2L of water per day.

### Sun protection

- Hat (preferably brimmed)
- Sunscreen (preferably 50+ with water resistance depending on time of year)
- Long sleeves shirt with collar and long trousers (light and breathable)
- Sunglasses
- Planning the walk to stay in shade during the middle of the day

## First Aid/Emergency equipment

**Whistle** (this may be part of your back pack buckle) This so you can communicate with your group if you get separated or signal for help if needed

**Torch** – hand held or head light. Your path may take you through dark spots like a tunnel or cave, also good to have if you stay out later than expected and it starts to get dark

**Personal first aid kit** - Carrying a personal first aid kit is a must, but it should only contain items you know how to use. As you learn more about first aid you can add to your kit.

At a minimum you should be able to treat minor cuts and blisters

1. Apply pressure if cuts are bleeding
2. If dirty, irrigate the wound with saline solution or clean water
3. Apply an adhesive dressing (Band-Aid/plaster)

Your kit should include items such as:

- Space blanket
- At least one roller bandage
- A triangular bandage
- Band aids / plasters (for cuts or blisters)
- Antiseptic swabs / wipes (for scrapes or cleaning skin)
- Notepad & pencil (to leave notes or record important information)

It may also include items such as:

- Hydrolyte/gastrolyte
- Tweezers
- Scissor
- Saline
- Pain relief (panadol/neurofen)
- Antihistamine (claratyne/telfast)
- Asthma puffer

The leader or group should have a first aid kit as well to deal with any larger issues.

In the case of emergency, you may need to contribute items from your personal first aid kit.



## Staying safe in the Bush

The number 1 rule is “**stay on the path, stay with the group**” this will reduce the likelihood of getting lost or hurt.

It will also reduce your impact on the environment such as:

- Spreading plant diseases such as phytophthora (cinnamon fungus)
- Spreading weed species such as dandelions
- Physical destruction
- Erosion
- Litter

**Watch out for risks to self and others** - these could be animals like snakes and spiders, or obstacles like loose rocks, flicky branches, or steep drops/cliff edges.

**Cooperate as a member of the Team** - tell them about any risks you see and follow directions.

## Being polite

- Give way to walkers going uphill (it's more difficult for them to restart)
- Keep to the left of the track when meeting other groups
- Keep noise to a minimum (listen to the noises of the bush)

What are ways in which I could look out for the needs of my group while bushwalking?

## Spacing

You should be **far enough apart** that you can easily walk without bumping into anyone or having to stop suddenly or constantly change how fast you are walking.

You need to be **close enough together** that you can always see the person in front of you, and the person behind you.

You should call out to **stop if you lose sight** of them so that the group can come back together.

Make sure you **stop at every intersection** to ensure the entire party is together so people don't end up taking a wrong turn.

## Buddy system

The Buddy system is where party members are paired to ensure that nobody is able to wander off alone as well as making sure one of the pair is in sight of the rest of the group at all times

Your “Buddy” should always know where you are. Stick together and yell out if your buddy is in trouble, gets stuck or hurt, or is lost.

If your buddy needs a bush bathroom break, you let people know and stay on the path where they left it to mark the spot. Off the track toileting is the single biggest cause of individuals getting lost.



### If you get lost or separated

If you get lost or separated from the rest of the group you should stop and stay where you are. If you keep going you may go further in the wrong direction.

#### Stop

- Stop moving
- Try to see the rest of the group
- Listen for the group

#### Stabilise

- Get out of the weather (however aim to stay close to the position you became lost)
- Put on/remove clothing as appropriate

#### Advertise

- Whistle, shout, or flash lights (anything in groups of three)
- Light a bright, smoky fire if possible
- Put out something brightly-coloured.

### How not to get lost

Always stay with the group

- Take part in numbering-off
- Keep with your buddy
- Keep track of where you are on the map
- Know features you will come across on your walk

These are some ways to keep your group together.

- Buddy system
- Head count by party leader
- Not going before lead walker or after tail-ender
- Numbering off
- Slowest person first
- Party leader at back with an assistant at front; or party leader in the middle with an assistant at each end
- Traffic light system (people describing their feelings and progress via traffic lights (eg. Red needs a break or stop and green all good to go)
- Giving the faster walkers tasks to keep them engaged and with the group
- Ensuring that the lead walker stops at all intersections and waits for the tail to catch up

### If something does go wrong

such as someone is hurt or missing you should do the following:

- Stop the party
- Ensure that nobody else is injured or lost
- Ensure that nobody wanders off from the group
- Administer first aid where necessary
- Call emergency services if required
  - 000: Standard emergency number
  - 112: global emergency number from mobiles
  - 106: national text emergency relay service (for hearing-impaired Scouts)
  - Telephone
  - Personal Locator Beacon (PLB)

If you do need to call emergency services you will need to provide the following information:

- Whether you are requesting police, fire brigade, or ambulance - **Always choose Police**
- Your name
- Your location
- The nature of the emergency
- How many people are injured
- How to access their location.

### When you get home

After your hike you should think about how it went and what you might do differently next time. This never changes however many hikes you go on you should always reflect on the experience and think about how it may have been better.

Start with the equipment and think about everything that was in your pack or on your body:

- what was useful?
- what was not useful?
- What was not useful enough to take next time, given its weight/size?
- what did you need but did not have with you?

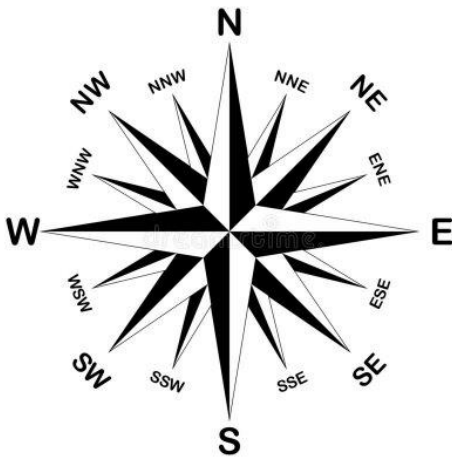
Now think about what you did

- What was the best part?
- what was the worse part?
- What did you learn about hiking or yourself?
- what would you do differently next time?

## Basic Navigation

The sun rises in the East, and sets in the West. At midday the sun will be slightly North as we are in the Southern Hemisphere.

### Compass Rose



This is a Compass Rose, directions can be described using the 4 cardinal ones listed below, down to 16 intermediate directions depending on how accurate you need to be.

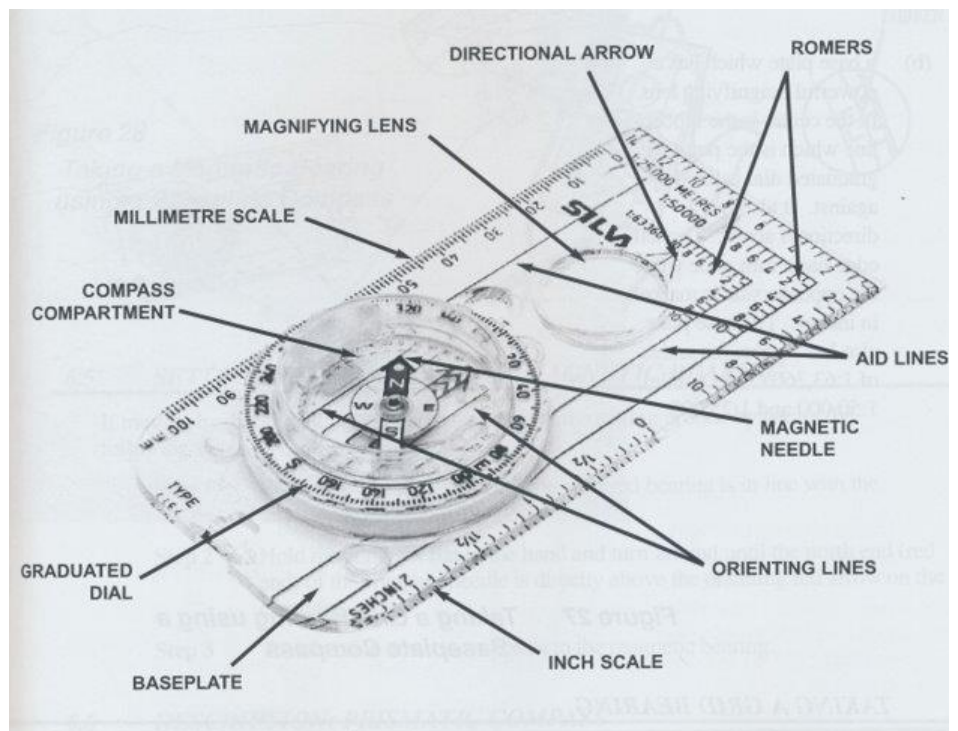
Know your directions. Going clockwise they are North – East – South – West (Never Eat Soggy Weetbix).

Half way between North and East is unsurprisingly Northeast (NE), and moving closer to East is East-northeast (ENE).

### Compass

You should be able to identify the following on a compass:

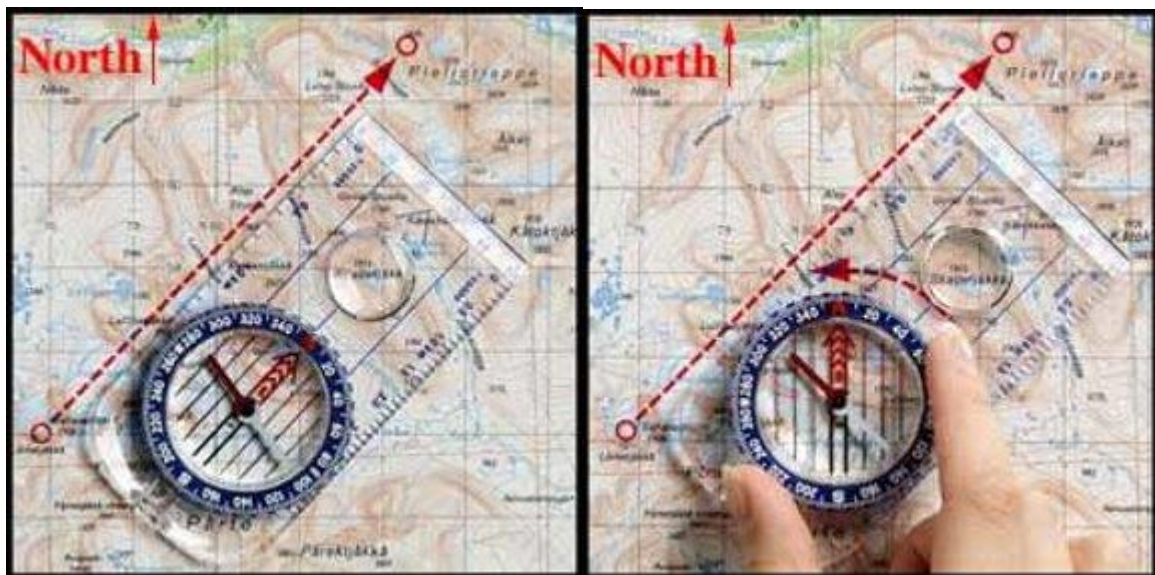
- Baseplate and its features
- Bezel or capsule / compartment
- Needle



**1** Place the compass on the map with the edge of the compass along the desired line of travel. Make sure Direction of Travel arrow points towards your destination.

**2** Rotate the compass housing until N on the dial points North on the map. Check that the compass housing red/black North/South lines are parallel with the map's meridians.

**3** Hold the compass in hand and turn your body until the red end of the compass needle (North) coincides with the red arrow in the bottom of the compass housing. The front of the compass with the direction of travel arrow is now pointing towards your destination.





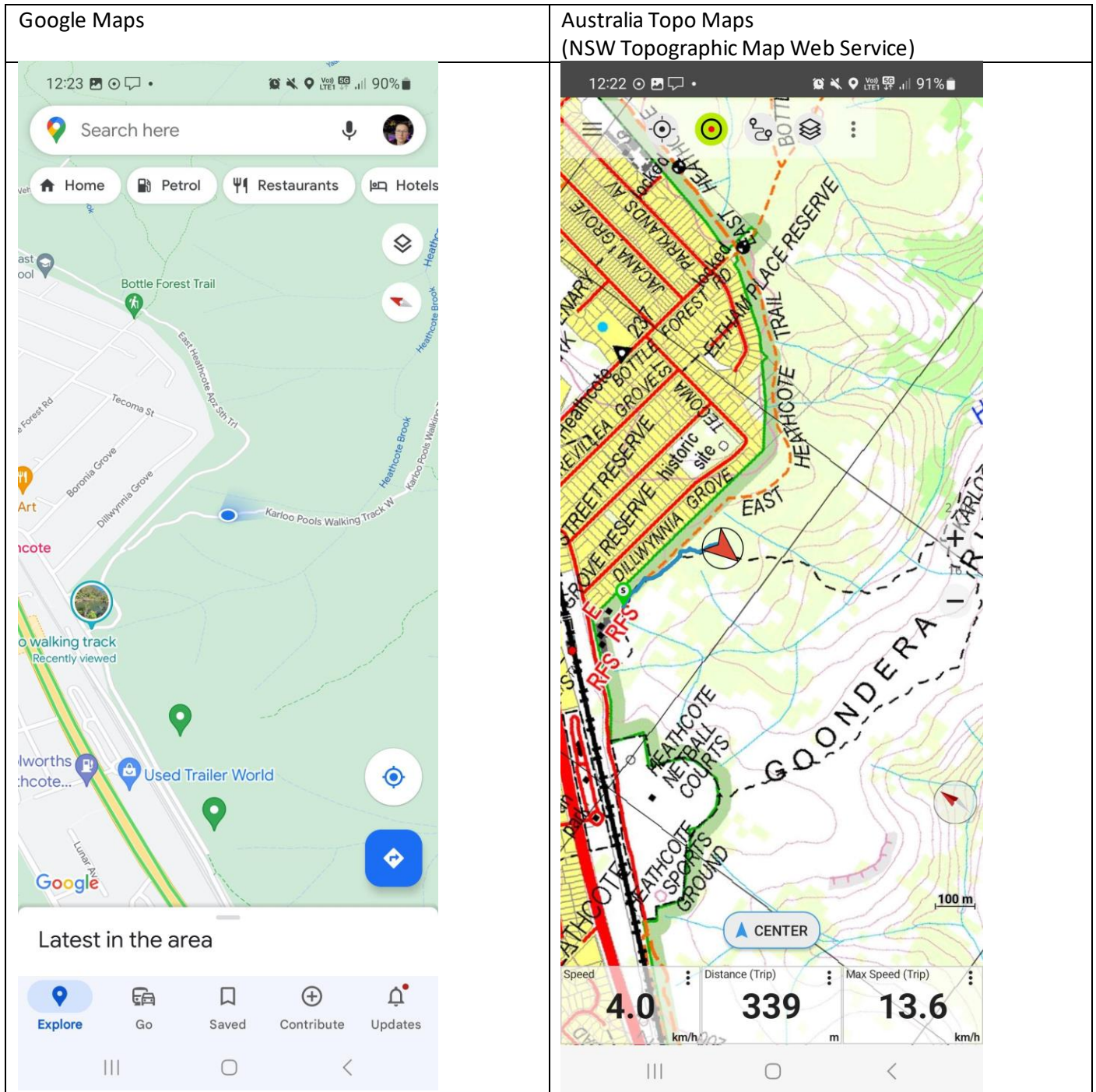
### Maps

There are a number of different types of maps:

- Topographic map suitable for bushwalking
- Line map, similar to those found in bushwalking guidebooks or park visitor guides
- Online mapping service (Open street map or similar)
- Satellite imagery

### GPS

All mobile phones these days have GPS, and with some common and free apps you can see exactly where you are, and where you need to go.



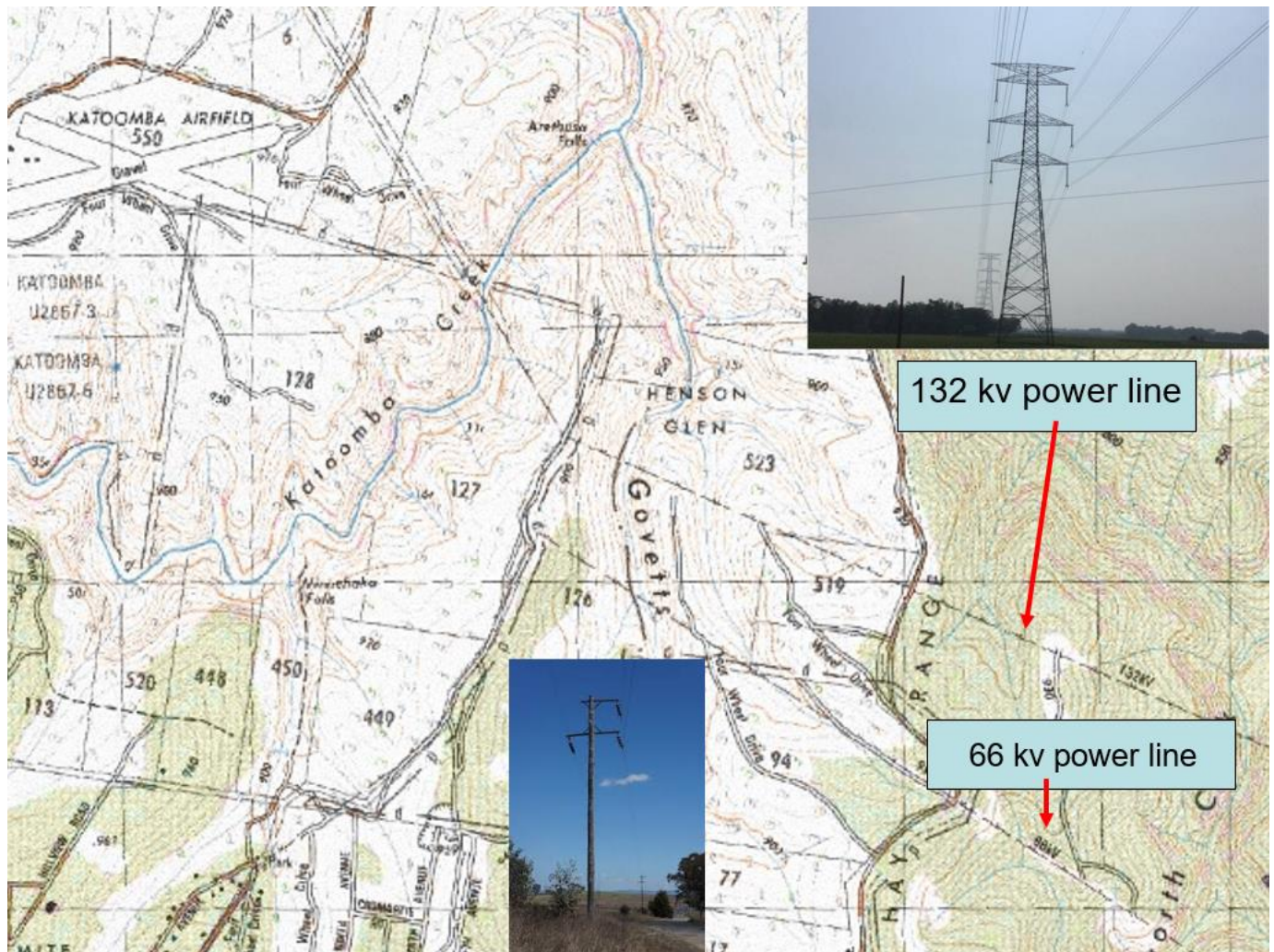
### Topographic

While relying on gps and online maps is much more common and can be more accurate, you should always carry a paper map and physical compass as a backup.

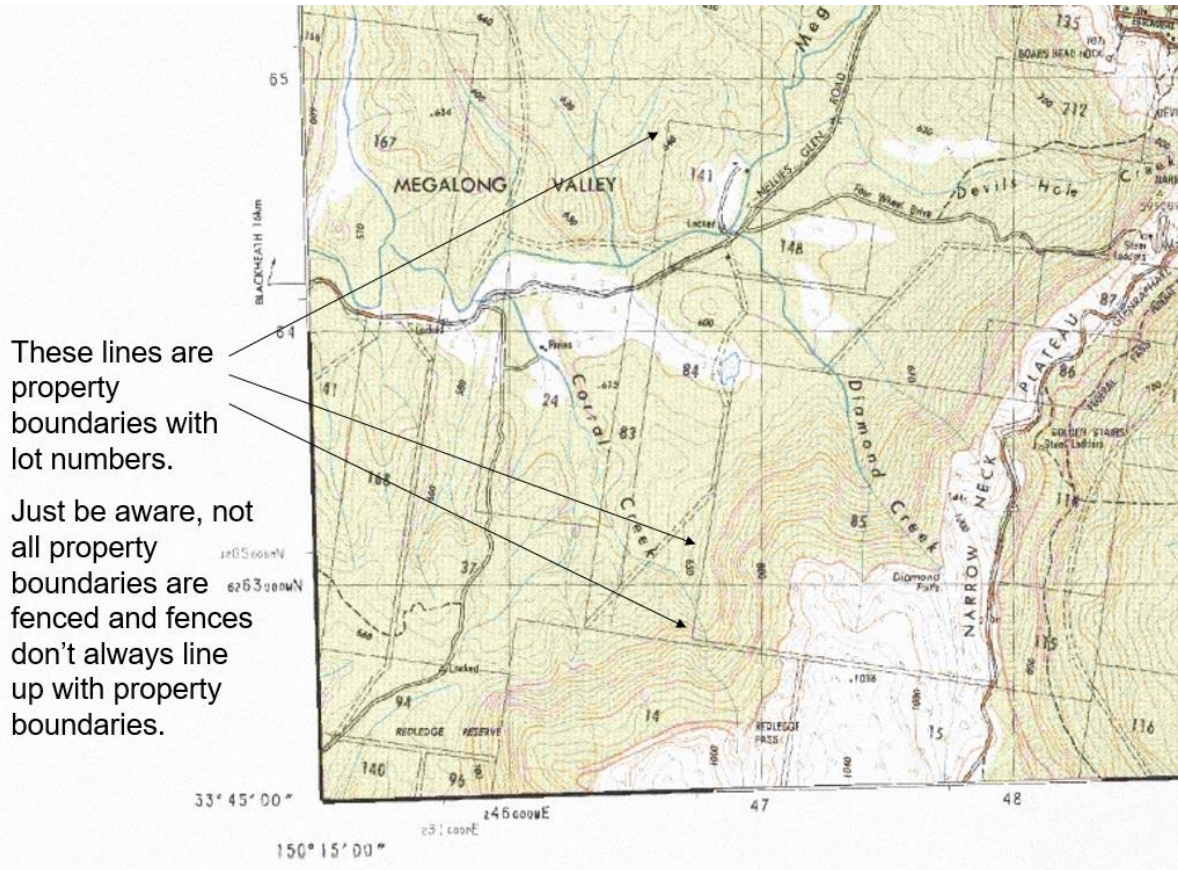
You can find and download topographic maps from Australian Government Earth Sciences department <https://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/national-location-information/topographic-maps-data/topographic-maps>

Or from the state repositories which are linked from the above site as these have the 1:25000 maps which are the best for bushwalking. For NSW maps you can find these here <https://portal.spatial.nsw.gov.au/portal/apps/sites/#/home/page/pages/map-viewers>

You should be able to identify some basic features on a topographic map.







Inside the purple line it is showing a Pine Forest/plantation, and the blue lines are creeks and water ways. Also note the roads and railway line, these are all great landmarks to be able to navigate from.

