



ART of Bush Survival

The Terms & Conditions of purchasing our tickets reminds us that we're responsible for our own survival in a harsh Australian bush environment. As Rangers, we need to be far enough ahead of that curve to be able to offer support to others who may be having trouble with the environment and to operate effectively. Rangers need to meet a higher mark for survival skills than most.

It's easy to love the bush sunset and the bush dawn. As Rangers, we can easily end up active in the worst conditions—learn to treasure 5 pm and 6 am in the bush when the relative calm of the period before sunrise and sunset offer a clean simplicity for those who live in it.

The most important keys to bush survival are:

- self-monitoring
- hydration
- sleep
- habits

After those, diet, gear, navigation, transport, and having a radio are all useful for peak capability, but aren't worth a lot on their own if you're struggling with more basic survival.

Self Monitoring

Self monitoring means being aware, first as a conscious exercise and eventually as a Zen-like state, of what survival issues you are facing at any particular moment...it's the hidden part of being situationally aware.

- Grumpy and frustrated? How's your water supply and recent use of it?
- Tired and worn-out? How's your food intake, and do you really want to volunteer for that extra shift?
- Having trouble concentrating? When did you last get at least a few good hours of sleep, and are you suffering from heat or cold?
- What's the weather report? Are you standing in the sun? Is the wind picking up—especially in the late morning from the lake, or suddenly anytime? What's the weather like upwind (do you smell rain/see lightning)? Is it unusually or suddenly cold? How long/heavy has it been raining?
- What's around you? Any art hazards nearby?
- Where is the nearest shade? Is there an available wind shelter?

Hydration

With a minimum of shade to walk in and an ample supply of water, a healthy, well-rested person can do all kinds of energetic things for hours in the worst heat and still do okay. But the key there is an ample supply of water. Often we forget that you need to stay hydrated at night as well. Even on a mild night, a light breeze in the dry air can suck water out of you quickly. Night or day, if you don't take several sips of water regularly, you'll get a headache and move with extra sand in your joints.

- You should be drinking close to three liters a day; good hydration is marked by light or clear pee (hard to evaluate in the relative dark of a portapotty, but still...). B and C-vitamins usually dye pee golden, but it should still never be dark.
- You won't feel thirsty until you're far behind on hydration, so take sips of water often even if you don't feel thirsty. Your body can only absorb water slowly, so frequent small sips are better than a "catch up" chug.
- Anything else in the water, like sugar, caffeine, or even a little alcohol, can take a little more water to process than it provides. Pure water is much better than most mixed beverages.
- Watch yourself, and your friends. There's a great Ranger "drinking game", based on this idea: if anyone mentions water, everyone drinks some, if someone has it on their mind, everyone may need some.
- Leave yourself a wake-up bottle of water next to your bed to start rehydrating first thing.
- Always know what water supply you have access to, and where you can replenish it.

Sleep

It's been said that, after water, your body needs sleep the most to function well; your emotions and intellect need a healthy body if they're going to perform well. (All of this, by the way, is at least as true for participants who need your help; be aware of these basic needs as you evaluate why a conflict may be happening.) Getting sleep in Jilakin Rock City can be a challenge. Plan for it!

- Schedule time to sleep so that you can really be up and rocking for the rest of your experience.
- Foam ear-plugs are heavenly, any time of day or night.
- Mimic native animals who've found ways to thrive in the harsh Ozzie bush—a shady place with breeze is by far the most comfortable place to sleep the day through.

Creature Comforts

After water, sleep, and shade, it's all about the little things. Always carry a little nutrient-dense food, for yourself or to share. Cashews, dried fruit, jerky, or energy bars are good, easy additions to your pack.