

Fires

Any fire left to burn can soon become a dangerous wildfire. These can move quickly through thousands of hectares of country, threatening or damaging homes, livestock and ecosystems.

Wildfires can harm or destroy the Cape's exceptional cultural heritage, leave stock without food, destroy the habitat of threatened species and also reduce ground cover, leading to increased erosion and poor water quality.

Many Cape York grazing properties and Aboriginal communities rely on registered fire projects to reduce greenhouse gases and generate income through carbon credits. Wildfires can therefore threaten their livelihoods. See <http://maps.capeyorknrm.com.au/carbon>

Follow these tips to ensure fire safety during your Cape York travels.

IF IN DOUBT, DON'T LIGHT IT

Don't light a fire unless you're certain it's safe and legal. Be prepared to safely manage and put out your fire.

BE AWARE OF FIRE BANS

When a fire ban is declared, all open flames are prohibited. This includes campfires and portable gas or liquid fuelled stoves.

It is your responsibility to know if a fire ban is in place. The Queensland Rural Fire Service covers Cape York Peninsula - 07 4232 5468 or www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au. Fire bans are usually announced via local radio stations.

Camp fires are allowed in most national park and national park (CYPAL) camping areas unless there's a fire ban.

BRING YOUR OWN FIREWOOD

You are NOT allowed to collect firewood in national parks. Even fallen branches may house and feed small mammals and other native species.

Do not cut down or damage standing trees or vegetation. Standing trees, even dead ones, are home for wildlife, and are part of the scenery.

Elsewhere, gather firewood well away from your camp and use it sparingly.

Better still, bring your own firewood. Make sure it doesn't contain any seeds, animals (including insects or spiders), flowers or root stock (to avoid bringing in potential invasive species).

LIGHT YOUR FIRE IN A PROPERLY CONSTRUCTED FIREPLACE

Use fire rings or a previously used site if they exist. Otherwise, build up a fireplace using stone or similar material. Or dig a trench at least 30cms deep. If you create a fireplace using man-made materials, remember to take them with you when you leave.

KEEP IT MANAGEABLE – AND MANAGE IT

Fires should be no bigger than one square metre. You must keep an area three metres around the fire clear.

Never leave a fire unattended. And keep your whole camp clear of leaf litter, in case of unexpected wildfire.



BE ABSOLUTELY SURE THE FIRE IS OUT

Before you leave your camp area, feel the ground underneath the coals. If it's still warm, the fire is NOT out. Put it out completely. Use water, rather than soil or sand. Timber can smoulder or burn for several days after your campfire. People or animals could walk over it and be burned, or it could flare up and become a wildfire. Make sure your campfire is out.

USE A FUEL STOVE

Fuel stoves are cleaner than campfires. They're easier to use in wet weather. They cook food and boil water much faster than a campfire, and they don't scar the landscape.

If you take warm clothing and good tents, you won't need fires for warmth.

DON'T THROW YOUR BUTTS IN THE FIRE

Cigarette butts are toxic litter. They often end up in our waterways, or in the guts of the fish you like to eat.

Stub your cigarettes out completely and put them in your rubbish to take out with you. And remember - cigarettes and butts are a fire hazard.

In 2016/17 Queensland Fire and Emergency Services responded to 55 fires they believed were started by discarded cigarette butts.

In February 2017, the Queensland Government introduced restrictions on smoking in national parks.

For details, go to

<https://www.npsr.qld.gov.au/experiences/pdf/smoke-free-areas-qld-national-parks.pdf>

BURY TOILET PAPER

Bury your toilet paper in a deep hole after use. Burning toilet paper can start wildfires, especially in the dry season.