

# DONKEY SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC

Website: [www.donkey.org.au](http://www.donkey.org.au)

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ABN: 82 148 300 307, Registration no. A0000117Z

## TREKKING

By Chris Johnson

The following thoughts are sourced from my trekking experiences over 8 years on Australia's Bicentennial National Trail and in the Victorian Alps.

### Resources:

Packhorse Trekking Manual by Mike Allen pub 2002.

Walkabout with Donkeys by Jenny Osten pub 1993.

Going out in the countryside along side a donkey is a very pleasant way of trekking. Donkeys walk the same pace as humans and can carry heavy, well packed loads for long periods. They are not too tall to lift packs onto their back and seem to enjoy your company. These qualities make the donkey the ideal trekking companion

There are certain principles I follow when trekking:

- KEEP IT LIGHT: pack what you think you need then throw half of it away!!
- Pack your donkey with equal weight and well balanced on each side.
- Avoid heavy awkward top loads.
- Ensure the load and harness does not rub your donkey.
- Keep the heavy items low within the pack bags.
- Ensure the pack load on each side is similar in shape.
- Ensure sharp objects are not able to cut into gear or donkey.

### CARING FOR YOUR PACK DONKEY

Ensure your donkey is fit and healthy before commencing your trek.

Ensure all your packsaddles fit well causing no rubbing and are in excellent condition.

Ensure all girths/saddle-cloths are as clean as possible and free from burrs etc.

Keep a routine that allows plenty of free time for donkey to graze, roll and drink.

Remove the pack load when you can e.g. lunch breaks.

Educate your donkey prior to leaving so your donkey knows about the gear, how to stand when packed, and what the signals through the lead rope mean.

Educate your donkey to drink from a bucket.

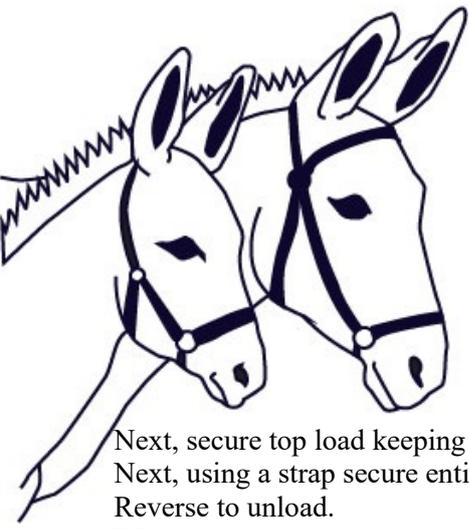
Ensure your donkey knows about being tethered and can be left tethered safely overnight.

Do not trim the hoof too short nor have too long a toe.

### TO SADDLE UP

Ensure your donkey stands well and is tied up safely allowing plenty of space for you to work in. Pre-pack your items ready to put on your donkey and have them within easy reach. Ensure donkeys coat is brushed clean, is burr free and also ensure hoof is healthy and free of stones etc. Place the saddle-cloth front and slide to back. Ensure a small gap is at front to allow air flow. Place the well fitting saddle slightly further back on the front than you would a riding saddle. Attend to girths (2 of) gradually, ensure they are clean, tight, comfortable and not too far forward or back. They can be crossed or in parallel. Check and set saddle pads so they do not hinder shoulder or hip movement ensuring the center of saddle sits over the donkeys spine in a straight line. Then attend to crupper and chest band. A crupper is essential at all times and the chest band is essential in hilly country. Again correct fit with little rub is important.

Next, load prepared packs attaching each side at same time if able.



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Next, secure top load keeping it light.

Next, using a strap secure entire load.

Reverse to unload.

Walk donkey out checking for balance and comfort. (For your own comfort reduce any rattles). Adjust as necessary. It is better to repack now than to start off unbalanced or with a very unhappy donkey.

## CARING FOR YOURSELF

You will need, like the donkey, to have well fitting gear i.e. your shoes. You need your walking shoes and camp shoes. Remember you will get wet/cold/hot, have clothes for these weather events.

Keep hands clean around food.

Drink plenty of clean water.

Remember it's the journey, so don't push to a certain destination. You will sometimes have to trek to the pace of the slowest in the team.

Have a good knowledge of first aid for humans and animals.

Be walking fit prior to leaving.

Have a good dry shelter e.g. tent or fly if the weather turns nasty don't always rely on a building for shelter.

Let someone know before you go.

Be prepared to enjoy living with you donkeys they will depend on you just as you will depend on them.

