



Camping Tips: Advice for Low Impact Campers

Learn these steps of low impact camping in order to preserve the wilderness areas. Ideas about keeping your trip simple.

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Every year avid fans of backpacking and camping take to the wilderness for the pure pleasure of connecting with the environment. What we do while on the trails makes a permanent impression on the wilderness areas we love. If we do not follow the steps of low impact camping our beloved wilderness areas will become no more than a roadside campground full of litter and leftovers from unconcerned campers.

Low Impact Camping is just that; low impact.

Low Impact is camping with the least amount of negative impact to the environment. By practicing these methods of low impact camping we can all be assured that our beloved wilderness areas will be there for future generations to enjoy just as we have.

First, keep your group small. The smaller the better because this means that your campsite will not be trampled down or over used. After you have selected the place your group will camp be sure to keep the campsite at least one hundred feet from the trail. Try also to use an area that is screened by natural flora and trees because this way you will be inconspicuous to others who will be moving along the same trail you have used.

What equipment you use is also important. Colorful camping gear may have caught your eye in the store but it really serves no purpose on the trail. Animals will see you before you see them and also colorful camping gear can and usually becomes offensive to others who are on the trail. Most have noticed while in the wilderness a campsite dotted with florescent tents invading the area. They are out of place and do not belong and are a great distraction to many including the wildlife, so avoid them if you can.

Keep your improvements at your newly found campsite to a minimum. Do not dig trenches around the camping area. These trenches will lead to erosion over time. Hip Holes will cause the same type erosion and should not be used either.

Use a "Hard" Campsite.

A hard campsite is an area where solid terrain is found. Avoid any area that is less than two hundred feet from a water source. This ground is soft and cannot take the wear and tear of repeated use for camping. Also avoid meadows and dense forest areas. By using areas that include dense flora this causes the flora and mosses to become trampled and they can and will erode and die if overused. Be sure to set up camp in a stable area where the ground is stable such as on a granite slab or very firm and dry dirt.

Be sure to pack out all your refuse. Never leave your trash in any wilderness area. By leaving trash, not only is it unsightly to the next hiker, backpacker, or camper but it is dangerous to area wildlife. Keep in mind that even a twist tie from a bread bag can turn into a lethal substance for any animal to ingest.

Never litter any wilderness area, and if litter is present, pick it up and pack it out even if you did not leave it. We all must be responsible even if the last person to visit the area was not so responsible.

Large campfires are out. The big campfire became very passe' once environmentalists began to see the effects of such fires. In most areas wood is being used faster than it can reproduce which leads to depletion of the area timber. By gathering kindling you are making an impact on the environment because fallen kindling rots away leaving mulch for seedlings to sprout in. Your best bet is to use a propane stove for cooking and heating in your camping area. By doing this you are not only saving wood, but also saving a forest fire from happening.

Protect the waterways.

This is a very important step in environmentally sound camping. Never dig your latrine closer than two hundred feet to any waterway, even a small stream that appears to be mostly underground. Do all washing from the same distance. Avoid getting soap into the waterway system because not only is it a pollutant but animals drink from the same waterways that you are bathing in. This can cause much harm to wildlife since they have not been exposed to such chemicals like our own family pets have been. These wilderness animals possess a much more delicate system than the animals we have contact with on a daily basis.

When hiking back if your party should hike through a meadow or heavily laden flora area be sure to spread out. Do not play follow the leader in these areas. In theory we know that we should stay on the trail if at all possible but in a large meadow or field this creates erosion in one particular area which can lead to much bigger problems. This area could later recede further and also a large rut could develop which again causes the area to erode and kill delicate flora and unseen wildlife. Spread out and never follow the leader in these large areas.

Any time we visit the wilderness we should carefully follow these steps to ensure that these pristine areas will be with us for generations. Not only are we responsible for our generation but we must take care to undo damage from previous generations to ensure the future of wilderness areas for all.

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