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# Hiking

## Hiking Info: Backcountry & Wilderness Guidelines

The goal is to keep the wild in wilderness--to keep everything as if it had never been seen or touched by man. Listed below are recommendations for low impact camping which will help eliminate evidence of your passage and preserve the character of the area. To leave wilderness areas and backpacking trails unspoiled for others to enjoy, please follow these very important rules:

1. Hike in small groups and stay on the trail. Large groups of people make a greater impact no matter how well-intentioned they are. This impact can take the form of physical damage to the resource or damage to another hiker's experience of solitude. It is also very important to stay on the trail when available. Trails are built not only to make your travel into the backcountry easier, but also to confine the impact of foot travel to a limited corridor. Cutting switchbacks and hiking off trails increases soil erosion creating ugly scars in once beautiful areas.
2. Pack out your trash and pick up any litter left by others. If everyone carried out additional debris left by others, litter problems would be quickly eliminated.
3. To dispose of human waste, use established latrines where available. Use a cat-hole where no latrine is available. Dig a 4 - 6 inch-deep hole at least 200 feet from any water source and certainly out of sight of the trail. Dig the hole as one single chunk of earth so you can refill and disguise it when finished.
4. Be careful not to contaminate any water source. Try a soapless cleanup for yourself, your clothes, and your dishes. If soap is necessary, use biodegradable soaps; however, even these can put a significant strain on the resource. Do not wash anything in main waterways. Pour water that is soapy or contaminated with food particles on well-drained, absorbent ground. Thoroughly treat or boil all water collected along the trail.
5. Never damage a standing tree for a campfire. Scatter unused piles of collected wood.
6. If a fire ring is available at a campsite, use it, then dismantle it and scatter the rocks as far as possible. If you must have a wood fire, keep it very small and use a fire pit. Simply use a trowel to dig a 6-inch thick chunk of earth intact and set it aside for later replacement. Continue digging down to mineral soil in order to protect fragile top soil. Do not ring the pit with rocks, as this will permanently scar and blacken them. Burn all wood to ashes and scatter cold ashes. Refill the hole and disguise it. With continuing popularity of backcountry and wilderness use, campers are encouraged to refrain from building a wood fire and cook on a lightweight backpacking stove. This will greatly lessen any user impact and make your cooking chores much easier.
7. Above all, be aware that you are not alone in the woods. Other wilderness hikers and campers also enjoy the solitude. Make as little noise as possible while hiking. Camp far off the trail and away from water sources. When you leave your campsite, make sure you have left behind no signs of your having been there.

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**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & TOURISM**

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