



the national voice  
for America's  
hikers

# Leave No Trace



As more and more hikers and backpackers head outdoors, minimizing our impacts is crucial to protecting the natural areas that we visit and enjoy. American Hiking Society is committed to preserving our nation's natural areas through our partnership with the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, an organization that promotes responsible outdoor skills and ethics.

## *The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace...*

- ◆ **Plan ahead and prepare.** Know the type of terrain and possible weather conditions you might encounter. Minimize impacts by keeping groups small and avoiding high use times for the trail. Repackage food to minimize waste. Walking single file and avoiding shortcuts will limit damage to the trail and surrounding ecosystems.
- ◆ **Travel and camp on durable surfaces.** Focus activity on resilient ground. Surfaces consisting of sand, gravel, rock, snow, or dry grass are durable and can withstand heavy use. Use existing campsites; keep them small and out of sight from trails in order to reduce visual impacts to other users. Walk through mud/puddles to avoid widening the trail.
- ◆ **Dispose of waste properly.** Be informed about waste storage and disposal. Pack it in. Pack it out! Clean up all trash and leftover food and properly seal all food in airtight containers and store it away from your tent. Also practice "negative trace" by picking up trash left by others. Dispose of human waste in catholes dug 6-8 inches deep in soil at least 200 feet from any water source. Fill it in and camouflage when finished. Pack out all toilet paper and hygiene products. Carry water 200 feet from water sources to wash dishes or yourself. Scatter strained dishwater.
- ◆ **Leave what you find.** You can look, but don't take. Leave everything that you find in the wilderness where it belongs. Avoid moving rocks, picking plants, and disturbing cultural/historical artifacts. Take pictures instead; it allows others to enjoy the same experience.
- ◆ **Minimize campfire impacts.** Keep your campfire small—or go without. Use previously constructed fire rings or mounds. Only burn small diameter wood found on the ground. Do not damage live or fallen trees. Be aware of the level of fire danger of the area. Make sure your campfire is completely smothered before you leave camp. Small camping stoves are much more efficient for cooking as are candle lanterns for light. These are easy to pack in and have no impact on the site.
- ◆ **Respect wildlife.** Let the wild be wild. Keep your distance and do not attract or approach them. Never feed animals human food as this disrupts their natural food cycle. Control pets in natural areas and always keep them restrained. At camp, cook away from the tent and thoroughly seal any food/leftovers when finished to ensure not to attract any insects or curious animals like deer, wolves or bears.
- ◆ **Be considerate of other visitors.** Show respect for other trail users. Keep voices/noises from getting intrusively loud. Obey any posted trail rules including rights of way. Orient rest spots and campsites away from the trail. Attempt to minimize visual impacts by wearing clothes that are earth tone colors: brown, green, tan or black.

*Text adapted from [www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org). Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics also offers region-specific guidelines. For more information call 1-800-332-4100.*

# Fact Sheet