

Wilderness areas have been a part of Washington long before the first American Adventurers ever settled here. We are lucky to have protected areas we can enjoy and share with future generations. And the only way these areas will last is if we take care of them; that's why we practice minimum-impact travel using "Leave No Trace" principles. Take nothing but memories and pictures. Leave nothing but footprints.

Leave what you find: including all natural, cultural, or archaeological features such as flowers, branches on trees & shrubs, rocks, fossils, arrowheads, potshards, baby elk, etc. It is actually illegal to remove anything but trash from our National Parks. If you're backpacking, make it your goal to leave a campsite looking like you were never there.

Pack it in; pack it out: don't leave any garbage in camp, along the trail, or anywhere else for that matter.

Human waste: many of us are uncomfortable talking about it, but relieving ourselves is a natural process we all experience so here are some guidelines while we are in the wilderness...

- Pack out sanitary supplies and toilet paper (TP) in sturdy or double plastic bags. Animals will likely dig it up if you try burying it – not a pleasant picture. Don't burn the TP.
- Use established latrines whenever available. TP can be disposed here, but not tampons/pads since they decompose too slowly.
- If there isn't a pit toilet available, dig a small *cat hole* at least 6" deep [15 cm] and about 4-6" in diameter [10-15 cm] at least 200' [61 m] away from all water sources, campsites & trails. Cover the hole completely and pack it down tight. Urination can take place on the ground surface but it should be away from vegetation and water.

Stay on *established* trails: If you must go off trail, try to walk on rock or snow rather than fragile alpine plants or soil. Spread out so you don't wear down a particular area. To rest, try to select a 'durable' location where you won't do any damage. Never cut switchbacks – it erodes the soil severely. Also, whenever humanly possible, stay on the trail even if it's muddy; creating "new" trails is actually creating "new" damage, and besides, don't you think your boots are up for a little challenge? They're made for it.

Take pictures: if not with a camera, then in you mind. These are some of the most beautiful areas in Washington, if not even the world. Take pride in being a part of the beauty.

BACKPACKERS

Cooking: Use a camp stove rather than building a fire. It prevents costly, deadly fires, allows downed trees to supply nutrients back to the earth, and it's likely prohibited to have an open fire anyway.

Cleaning up: keep all soap out of the water, even it's 'biodegradable.' Wash yourself, pots, pans, dishes, etc. (who knows what you may want to wash) at least 200' [61 m] away from any natural water. Soap causes algae blooms, which deprives fish and other water life of oxygen. Our bodies also have chemicals coating them that don't belong in the water (sunscreen, bug repellent, Uncle Charlie's aftershave) – rinse / wipe down before you swim. For waste water from cooking and cleaning, strain food particles then dispose of water using a broadcast or wide-dispersal method.

People food & wildlife: The two shouldn't be mixed in the wilderness. Keep your food and trash away from wildlife and never feed the animals (yes, even if the little, baby critter is cute). We don't want to alter natural foraging habits or create dangerous habits for the animals (their natural fear of humans is a good thing, but if we supply them with meals, intentional or not, they will lose that fear).

Effort rewarded: As you look around during your hike & enjoy the scenery, keep in mind all the people who went before you and the generations that will follow – the smallest amount of damage adds up quickly, but with a little effort and conscious thought, we can keep the area beautiful for many more Adventures to come.