

LEAVE NO TRACE

Gone are the days when collecting firewood around your campsite is always acceptable. Gone are the days when leaving that biodegradable fruit peel is considered harmless. Gone are the days when backcountry visitors can casually approach the land through which they travel. With wilderness use growing and more and more people looking for solace in the canyons, mountains and waterways of the natural world there is no room or tolerance for those unwilling to preserve the beauty of the wild places.

The Leave No Trace concept was developed as a way to help the ever-growing number of outdoor enthusiasts minimize their impact on the land. The LNT practices are based on the idea of extending common courtesy to others who will follow, as well as to the flora and fauna in the areas we visit.

Utah is a delicate yet magical land of canyons, sand dunes, mountains, deeply carved arroyos, prehistoric ruins, pictographs, petroglyphs, and crypto biotic soil crusts. The extreme temperatures and aridity in the lands protect and preserve both the good as well as the bad. Corncobs and pottery shards that are hundreds of years old can still be found at ancient Native American sites in the desert regions. But the climate that slows the breakdown of these items also slows the disintegration of human waste, litter and unsightly markings. Because every wild area is unique, each has different LNT guidelines.

PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT!

You've heard the mantra. It's easy enough. Anything you take in, you must pack out. Be prepared with garbage bags and resealable bags so that you can pack things out in the cleanest possible way. All food scraps, garbage, grease, leftovers, toilet paper, fishing line etc. must be carried out with you.

TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES

To reduce damage to desert surfaces – many of which require hundreds of years to repair themselves – stay on established trails and in established campsites. Walk single-file on trails rather than side by side to avoid widening routes. Don't "bushwhack" between campsites or undertake major remodel jobs when setting up camp. Breaking branches off a live tree leaves scars and opens the tree to disease.

Avoid creating new trails, fire rings, or campsites, and when you break camp make sure you have cleaned out all trash and removed all other evidence that you were there which includes returning rocks and logs to their original positions and brushing out social trails.

PROTECT WATER RESOURCES

Water forms and defines our landscape. It is powerful and in the desert it is scarce. Campers need to respect water sources and make every effort to conserve them and keep them clean. A good general rule is to establish camp at least 200 feet from any water source. Animals need undisturbed access to water, and such a distance makes it less likely that humans will unintentionally contaminate the water. Dig "cat holes" 6 to 8 inches deep and at least 200 feet from any water source. Urinate well away from camp and trails, and aim for rocks or sand rather than vegetation, as salt deprived animals have been known to defoliate plants that have been urinated on to get at the salt. In desert river areas experts that if no restroom facilities are available it is best to urinate in the rivers. This keeps the heavily traveled river banks from

smelling like outhouses. All solid waste should be packed out of these corridors. And no matter where you're camping, toilet paper should always be packed out with you.

WASTEWATER AND FEEDING ANIMALS

Use very small amounts of soap, if any, to wash your self or your dishes, and dump dirty water 200 feet from the original water source. Hand sanitizers are a good option as they allow you to wash your hands without water. Use a clean container when collecting water for your dishes. When finished with the dishes, strain the water and pack out the food scraps. Don't leave food or food waste where animals can get it as it damages their health, alters their natural behavior, and introduces unusual foods to their diets.

Bears offer a good example of wildlife behavior alterations in regard to human food. If wild bears aren't exposed to human food, they won't hang around campsites and garbage bins. But once they've had a taste they seek out humans and have been known to attack coolers, tents, and people. Rodents, birds and skunks also get used to handouts and are drawn to human camps as a result of past experience. Animals are opportunists; don't give them the opportunity.

MINIMIZING CAMPFIRE IMPACT

Campfires are no longer permitted in many areas and you should always use established fire rings where fires are allowed. Fire pans are another way of making low-impact fire, as is excavating a shallow depression in the sand or gravel at the bottom of a dry wash that has no organic soil. When you are finished, scatter the ash before refilling the depression. This will make the site less noticeable to others. If you are in an area where wood collecting is allowed, use smaller pieces of wood that will burn completely to ash. Gather driftwood and deadwood where allowed. Never break limbs from live trees.

OTHER POINTS TO REMEMBER

Be considerate of wildlife by watching from a distance and do your best to not disturb their habitat.

Leave natural features undisturbed. Do not alter or even touch prehistoric sites you come across or take items you find as souvenirs.

Do not carry out specimens or seeds, which may spread non-native plants into non-native ecosystems.

Keep a low profile, be courteous, and don't disturb other visitors.

Like hundreds of others, you love the land, love to be in it, and love to find solace and recreation in its natural boundaries. It is up to you to do your part and walk softly upon the places we all love.