



Leaving No Trace

The Sierra Nevada is a fantastic mountain range; by any measure it is one of the great ranges of the world. But it's popularity also leads to environmental pressures and without care and awareness on the part of those who visit here the Sierra will change and degrade. We want to do our part to ensure that those who follow in our steps will also experience an untouched natural wilderness. We ask you to help in this goal and offer the following suggestions to minimize our social and environmental impacts.

Before you leave home: Plan ahead and prepare

- Pack according to our equipment lists so as not to bring excess equipment.
- If you have new equipment remove all packaging and tags; less trash to haul out and less to misplace.
- Remove extra food packaging and instead put your food in ziplock bags or better yet just light weight non-zip plastic bags. Use a loose knot instead of a twist tie.

When on the trip:

Travel and camp on durable surfaces:

- Stay on the trails as we travel in. (Please no cutting switchbacks on the trail.)
- We want to take breaks on durable surfaces. I.e. toss the pack down on a boulder rather than in the middle of a pretty meadow with soft (fragile) grass. Ideally we also take rest stops out of sight of the trail so other visitors don't even know we're there.
- If we encounter pack stock move to the downhill side of the trail and let them pass.
- Since we often hike off-trail to the peaks we want to hike on hard surfaces rather than on meadows or other fragile spots.
- We choose a camp site on a hard surface or somewhere that has already been used for camping. In the alpine environment woody stemmed plants, especially heather, are particularly susceptible to damage.
- Have a lightweight soft pair of shoes or sandals for around camp and wear these rather than heavy mountaineering boots which tear up the vegetation.
- In camp do not trench or dig drainage ditches. "Good camp spots are found and not made".
- If we use a little used campsite we want to "naturalize" the area when we leave by scattering tent tiedown rocks and policing the area for errant pieces of garbage and the like prior to our departure.
- We do not use campfires on trips. Stoves only.
- We carry out all trash. This includes "biodegradables" such as apple cores etc.
- We want to keep track of all trash. Candy wrappers etc. are easy to drop. With soup packages, and the like, do not completely tear off the top when opening. Leave it partially attached and it will not get lost.
- No feeding of the local animals. It gets them into bad habits and they are more likely to raid our camp once they get the taste for human food.
- We want to store all food in such a way that avoids any animals getting into it, including bears. This may mean hanging in some areas and bear canisters in others.
- Human waste. Avoid peeing on vegetation where the salt content may attract animals. Solid waste needs to be buried at least six inches deep when we're not in the alpine zone but above tree line and especially during on-snow trips more care needs to be used to find a suitable place. We'll brief you on trip-specific concerns with the human waste issue at the beginning of your trip. In some areas at some times of year TP may be burned, but generally the risk of fire is too great and it is too hard to completely burn the paper. It needs to be carried out so bring a spare ziplock bag for it. Your guide will fill you in on the details. Be prepared to pack it out with the rest of your garbage.
- In winter use a tree well for toilet facilities or find some exposed rock or dirt. Great care must be taken on on-snow trips to avoid contaminating water sources when the snow melts.
- In the Whitney area we carry out human waste. We will provide you with bags to put it all in for packing out.
- There is no real need to use soap in the backcountry. If you do want to freshen up use straight water.
- Clean all dishes well away from the water source and disperse the rinse water over a wide area.

We are all a part of the solution and our individual actions can have a major long term impact.