

LEAVE NO TRACE

1 - PLAN AHEAD & PREPARE

Poor advance preparation can cause damage to the environment

2 - TRAVEL & CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES

One careless step can cause a trend of impact

3 - DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

Improper disposal of food, trash, urine, feces, and wastewater spreads disease, changes the habits of wildlife, and spoils the scenery.

4 - LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

Removing or altering natural or historic items harms wildlife, scenery, and cultural values.

5 - MINIMISE CAMPFIRE IMPACT

Fires can cause lasting impacts to the wilderness. DO NOT light a fire, use a lightweight stove for cooking.

6 - RESPECT WILDLIFE

When wildlife obtain human food, or are approached too closely by humans, they may lose their wild habits, spread disease, and become nuisances or safety hazards

7 - BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS

Hike your own hike, but remember that inconsiderate behavior detracts from the experience of others.



1 - PLAN AHEAD & PREPARE

Adequate trip planning and preparation helps wilderness travelers accomplish trip goals safely and enjoyably, while simultaneously minimizing damage to the land. Poor planning often results in miserable hikers and damage to natural and cultural resources. Rangers often tell stories of hikers they have encountered who, because of poor planning and unexpected conditions, degrade wilderness resources and put themselves at risk.

Why Is Trip Planning Important?

- It helps ensure the safety of groups and individuals.
- It prepares you to Leave No Trace and minimizes resource damage.
- It contributes to accomplishing trip goals safely and enjoyably.
- It increases self-confidence and opportunities for learning more about nature.

Seven Elements to Consider When Planning a Trip

- Identify and record the goals (expectations) of your trip.
- Identify the skill and ability of trip participants.
- Gain knowledge of the area you plan to visit from land managers, maps, and literature.
- Choose equipment and clothing for comfort, safety, and Leave No Trace qualities.
- Plan trip activities to match your goals, skills, and abilities.
- Evaluate your trip upon return note changes you will make next time.

Other Elements to Consider

- Weather
- Terrain
- Regulations/restrictions
- Private land boundaries
- Average hiking speed of group and anticipated food consumption (leftovers create waste which leaves a trace!)
- Group size (does it meet regulations, trip purpose and Leave No Trace criteria?)



2 - TRAVEL & CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES

The goal of travel in the outdoors is to move through natural areas while avoiding damage to the land or waterways. Understanding how travel causes impacts is necessary to accomplish this goal. Travel damage occurs when surface vegetation or communities of organisms are trampled beyond recovery. The resulting barren area leads to soil erosion and the development of undesirable trails. The Cederberg is a wilderness area where travel should be considered off-trail.

Two primary factors increase how off-trail travel affects the land: durability of surfaces and vegetation, and frequency of travel (or group size).

- Durability refers to the ability of surfaces or vegetation to withstand wear or remain in a stable condition.
- Frequency of use and large group size increase the likelihood that a large area will be trampled, or that a small area will be trampled multiple times.
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Surface Durability

The concept of durability is an important one for all wilderness travellers to understand. The natural surfaces described below respond differently to wilderness travel.

Rock, sand and gravel: These surfaces are highly durable and can tolerate repeated trampling and scuffing. (However, lichens that grow on rocks are vulnerable to repeated scuffing).

Streams and puddles: Water is a precious scarce resource for all living things in the wild. Don't walk through puddles, mud holes or disturb surface water in any way. Potholes are also home to tiny animals.



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Vegetation: The resistance of vegetation to trampling varies. Careful decisions must be made when traveling across vegetation. Select areas of durable vegetation, or sparse vegetation that is easily avoided. Dry grasses tend to be resistant to trampling. Wet meadows and other fragile vegetation quickly show the effects of trampling. Trampling ensures new travelers to take the same route and leads to undesirable trail derailment. As a general rule, travelers who must venture off-trail should spread out to avoid creating paths that encourage others to follow. Avoid vegetation whenever possible, especially on steep slopes where the effects of off-trail travel are magnified.

Living soil: Sometimes referred to as cryptobiotic crust, or crypto, living soil is often found in desert environments, and is extremely vulnerable to foot traffic. Living soil consists of tiny communities of organisms that appear as a blackish and irregular raised crust upon the sand. This crust retains moisture in desert climates and provides a protective layer, preventing erosion. One footstep can destroy this fragile soil. It is important to use developed trails in these areas. Travel across living soil should only be done when absolutely necessary. Walk on rocks or other durable surfaces if you must travel off-trail. In broad areas of living soil where damage is unavoidable it is best to follow in one another's footsteps so the smallest area of crust is affected, exactly the opposite rule from travel through vegetation. Living soil is also extremely vulnerable to mountain bicycle travel.

Ice and snow: The effect of travel across these surfaces is temporary, making them good choices for travel assuming good safety precautions are followed and the snow layer is of sufficient depth to prevent vegetation damage.



Camp on Durable Surfaces

Selecting an appropriate campsite is perhaps the most important aspect of low-impact wilderness use. It requires the greatest degree of judgment and information, and often involves making trade-offs between minimizing ecological and social impacts. A decision about where to camp should be based on information about the level and type of use in the area, the fragility of vegetation and soil, the likelihood of wildlife disturbance, an assessment of previous impacts, and your party's potential to cause or avoid impact.

Choosing a Campsite in High-use Areas

Allow enough time and energy at the end of the day to select an appropriate site. Fatigue, bad weather, and late departure times are not acceptable excuses for choosing poor or fragile campsites. Generally, it is best to camp on sites that are so highly impacted that further careful use will cause no noticeable impact. In popular areas, these sites are obvious because they have already lost their vegetation cover. Also, it is often possible to find a site which naturally lacks vegetation, such as exposed bedrock or sandy areas.

For high-impact sites, tents, traffic routes and kitchen areas should be concentrated on already impacted areas. The objective is to confine impact to places which already show use and avoid enlarging the area of disturbance. When leaving camp, make sure that it is clean and appealing for other campers who follow.



Camping in Undisturbed Remote Areas

Pristine areas are usually remote, see few visitors and show no obvious impacts. Visit these special places only if you are committed to, and highly skilled in, Leave No Trace techniques. In pristine places, it is best to spread out tents, avoid repetitive traffic routes and move camp every night. The objective is to minimize the number of times any part of the site is trampled. In setting up camp, disperse tents and the kitchen on durable sites. Wear soft shoes around camp. Minimize activity around the kitchen and places where packs are stashed. The durable surfaces of large rock slabs make good kitchen sites. Watch where you walk to avoid crushing vegetation and take alternate paths to water. Minimize the number of trips to water by carrying water containers. Always check regulations, but camping 60 meters (70 adult steps) from water is a good rule of thumb.

When breaking camp, take time to naturalize the site. Covering scuffed areas with native materials (such as pine needles), brushing out footprints, and raking matted grassy areas with a stick will help the site recover and make it less obvious as a campsite. This extra effort will help hide any indication where you camped and make it less likely that other backcountry travelers will camp in the same spot. The less often a pristine campsite is used the better chance it has of remaining pristine.

The most appropriate campsites in arid lands are on durable surfaces, such as rock and gravel, or on sites that have been so highly impacted further use will cause no additional disturbance. Previously impacted sites are obvious because they have already lost their vegetation cover or the rocky soils have been visibly disturbed. If choosing this type of site, make sure your spot is large enough to accommodate your entire group.



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Cooking areas, tents and backpacks should be located on rock, sand or gravel. Consciously choose durable routes of travel between parts of your camp so that connecting trails do not develop. Vary your routes since the objective is to minimize the amount of trampling and compaction on any specific part of the campsite. Limit your stay to no more than two nights. Never scrape away or clean sites of organic litter like leaves, and always minimize the removal of rocks and gravel. The organic litter will help to cushion trampling forces, limit the compaction of soils, release plant nutrients and reduce the erosive forces of rainfall. Disturbing the lichen-coated and varnished rocks known as desert pavement can leave a visible impact for hundreds of years. Once overturned, these rocks are difficult to replace and the lichens and varnish will not grow back within our lifetime.

Camping in River Corridors

River corridors are narrow strips of land and water with little room to disperse human activities. Campsites are often designated. It is generally best to camp on established sites located on beaches, sandbars or non-vegetated sites below the high-water line.



3 - DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

Human Waste

Proper disposal of human waste is important to avoid pollution of water sources, avoid the negative implications of someone else finding it, minimize the possibility of spreading disease and maximize the rate of decomposition.

In most locations, burying human feces in the correct manner is the most effective method to meet these criteria. Solid human waste must be packed out from some places, such as narrow river canyons. Your guide can advise you of specific rules for the area you plan to visit.

Cat Holes

Cat holes are the most widely accepted method of waste disposal.

- Locate cat holes at least 100m (about 70 adult paces) from water, trails and camp.
- Select an inconspicuous site where other people will be unlikely to walk or camp.
- If camping in the area for more than one night, or if camping with a large group, cat hole sites should be widely dispersed.
- Try to find a site with deep organic soil. This organic matter contains organisms which will help decompose the feces. (Organic soil is usually dark and rich in color.) The Cederberg does not have as much organic soil as a forested area. (See number 2 under Digging a Cat hole below.)
- Choose an elevated site where water would not normally go during runoff or rain storms. The idea here is to keep the feces out of water. Over time, the decomposing feces will percolate into the soil before reaching water sources.
- If possible, locate your cat hole where it will receive maximum sunlight. The heat from the sun will aid decomposition.



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Follow these steps to dig a cat hole.

- A small garden trowel is the perfect tool for digging a cat hole.
- Dig the hole 15-20cm deep (about the length of the trowel blade) and 10-15cm in diameter. In a hot veld, human waste does not biodegrade easily because there is little organic soil to help break it down. In the veld, the cat hole should be only 10-15cm deep. This will allow the heat and sun to hasten the decay process.
- When finished, the cat hole should be filled with the original dirt and disguised with native materials.

Avoid areas where water visibly flows, such as sandy washes, even if they are dry at the moment. Select a site that will maximize exposure to the sun in order to aid decomposition. Because the sun's heat will penetrate desert soils several inches, it can eventually kill pathogens if the feces are buried properly. North-facing slopes and ridge tops will have more exposure to sun and heat than other areas.

Toilet Paper & Wet wipes

DO NOT BURN YOUR WASTE OR TOILET PAPER - EVER

Toilet paper and wet wipes must be carried out with you! Placing toilet paper in a plastic bag and packing it out as trash is the best way to Leave No Trace. Dog poo bags are perfect for this.



Tampons

Proper disposal of tampons requires placing them in plastic bags and packing them out. Do not bury them because they don't decompose readily and animals may dig them up. DO NOT BURN THEM!

Urine

Urine has little direct effect on vegetation or soil. In some instances, urine may draw wildlife which are attracted to the salts. They can defoliate plants and dig up soil. Urinating on rocks, pine needles, and gravel is less likely to attract wildlife. Diluting urine with water from a water bottle can help minimize negative effects.

Other Forms of Waste

"Pack it in, Pack it out" is a familiar mantra to seasoned hikers. Any user of recreation lands has a responsibility to clean up before he or she leaves. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods.

PACK OUT ALL TRASH AND GARBAGE

Plan meals to avoid generating messy, smelly garbage. It is critical to wildlife that we pack out kitchen waste, such as bacon grease and leftovers. Garbage that is half buried will still attract animals and make a site unattractive to other visitors.

Overlooked trash is litter, and litter is not only ugly—it can also be deadly. Plastic bags, cigarette butts, fishing line and other trash can be harmful to our environment when not properly disposed of.

Carry plastic bags to haul your trash (and maybe someone else's). Before moving on from a camp or resting place, search the area for micro-trash such as bits of food and trash, including organic litter like orange peels or egg shells.



LEAVE NO TRACE

Wastewater

To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 100m away from streams or lakes. Scatter strained dishwater. Hand sanitizers that don't require rinsing allow you to wash your hands without worrying about wastewater disposal.

For dishwashing, use a clean pot or other container to collect water, and take it to a wash site at least 100m away from water sources. This lessens trampling of lakeshores, riverbanks and springs, and helps keep soap and other pollutants out of the water. Use hot water, elbow grease, and soap if absolutely necessary. Strain dirty dishwater with a fine mesh strainer before scattering it broadly. Do this well away from camp, especially if bears are a concern. Pack out the contents of the strainer in a plastic bag along with any uneaten leftovers.

In developed campgrounds, food scraps, mud and odors can accumulate where wastewater is discarded. Contact your campground host for the best disposal practices and other ways to Leave No Trace at your campsite.

Soaps and Lotions

Soap, even when it's biodegradable, can affect the water quality of lakes and streams, so minimise its use.

Always wash yourself well away from shorelines (100m), and rinse with water carried in a pot or jug. This allows the soil to act as a filter. Where fresh water is scarce, think twice before swimming in creeks or potholes. Lotion, sunscreen, insect repellent and body oils can contaminate these vital water sources.



4 - LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

Allow others a sense of discovery by leaving rocks, plants, archaeological artifacts and other objects of interest as you find them.

Minimize Site Alterations

Leave areas as you found them. Do not dig trenches for tents or construct lean-tos, tables, chairs or other rudimentary improvements. If you clear an area of surface rocks, twigs or pine cones replace these items before leaving. For high-impact sites, it is appropriate to clean up the site and dismantle inappropriate user-built facilities, such as multiple fire rings and constructed seats or tables. Consider the idea that good campsites are found and not made.

In many locations, properly located and legally constructed facilities, such as a single fire ring, should be left in place. Dismantling them will cause additional impact because they will be rebuilt with new rocks and thus impact a new area. Learn to evaluate all situations you find.

Avoid Damaging Trees and Plants

Do not damage trees even if they look dead, do not hammer nails into trees for hanging things, hack at them with hatchets and saws, or tying tent guy lines to trunks—thus girdling the tree. Carving initials into trees is unacceptable. The cutting of boughs for use as sleeping pads creates minimal benefit and maximum impact. Sleeping pads are available at stores catering to campers.

Picking a few flowers does not seem like it would have any great impact and, if only a few flowers were picked, it wouldn't. But, if every visitor thought "I'll just take a few," a much more significant impact might result. Take a picture or sketch the flower instead of picking it. Experienced campers may enjoy an occasional edible plant, but they are careful not to deplete the surviving vegetation or disturb plants that are rare or are slow to reproduce.



5 - MINIMISE CAMPFIRE IMPACT

Fires vs. Stoves: The use of campfires, once a necessity for cooking and warmth, is steeped in history and tradition. Some people would not think of camping without a campfire. Campfire building is also an important skill for every camper.

Yet, the natural appearance of many areas has been degraded by the overuse of fires and an increasing demand for firewood. The development of lightweight efficient camp stoves has encouraged a shift away from the traditional fire for cooking. Stoves have become essential equipment. They are fast, flexible and minimise the risk of wild fires. Stoves operate in almost any weather condition—and they Leave No Trace.

Should You Build a Fire?

In short, NO. Under no circumstances should you light an open fire in the Wilderness. The risk of causing a wildfire is too high and the damage is devastating.

On your trip with Wild Cape Hikes, you will only use stoves (either liquid or gas fuelled) If you have any questions about using or buying the right stove, please check with your guide before the trip.

Even when using a stove, great care must be taken.

- Follow all product and safety labels for stoves.
- Make sure you can use the stove before the trip.
- Use approved containers for fuel.
- Never leave a stove unattended.
- Keep other fuel sources away from fire.
- Set up and use the stove on a flat rock area designated by your guide.
- Provide adequate supervision for young people when using stoves



6 - RESPECT WILDLIFE

Learn about wildlife through quiet observation. Do not disturb wildlife or plants just for a “better look.” Observe wildlife from a distance so they are not scared or forced to flee. Large groups often cause more damage to the environment and can disturb wildlife so keep your group small.

Quick movements and loud noises are stressful to animals. Travel quietly and do not pursue, feed or force animals to flee. In hot or cold weather, disturbance can affect an animal’s ability to withstand the rigorous environment. Do not touch, get close to, feed or pick up wild animals. It is stressful to the animal, and it is possible that the animal may harbor rabies or other diseases.

Sick or wounded animals can bite, peck or scratch and send you to the hospital. Young animals removed or touched by well-meaning people may cause the animals parents to abandon them. If you find sick animals or animals in trouble you should notify your guide.

Considerate hikers observe wildlife from afar, give animals a wide berth, store food securely and keep garbage and food scraps away from animals. Remember that you are a visitor to their home.

Allow animals free access to water sources by giving them the buffer space they need to feel secure. Ideally, camps should be located 70 meters or more from existing water sources. This will minimize disturbance to wildlife and ensure that animals have access to their precious drinking water. By avoiding water holes at night, you will be less likely to frighten animals because desert dwellers are usually most active after dark. With limited water in arid lands, desert travelers must strive to reduce their impact on the animals struggling for survival.



7 - BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS

One of the most important components of outdoor ethics is to maintain courtesy toward other visitors. It helps everyone enjoy their outdoor experience. Many people come to the outdoors to listen to nature. Excessive noise, uncontrolled pets and damaged surroundings take away from the natural appeal of the outdoors.

The feeling of solitude, especially in open areas, is often enhanced when group size is small, contacts are infrequent and behavior is unobtrusive. To maximize your feeling of privacy, avoid trips on holidays and busy weekends or take a trip during the off season.

Technology continues to shape the outdoor experience. Personal preferences range from high-tech outdoor travelers, who might want to listen to music and collect images on their devices, to an anti-tech perspective that favors a minimal use of gadgets. Different strokes for different folks, but be sure to thoroughly consider how your experience is affecting the way someone else enjoys the outdoors. For example, earbuds may be a less obtrusive way to enjoy music than external speakers, but if you have the volume turned so high that you can't hear someone behind you who wants to pass, your personal preference for music will negatively affect other people.

The general assumption on a narrow trail is that hikers headed downhill will step aside to allow an uphill foot traveler to easily pass. Before passing others, politely announce your presence and proceed with caution.



LEAVE NO TRACE

Take rest breaks on durable surfaces well off the designated trail. Keep in mind that visitors to seldom used places require an extra commitment to travel quietly and lightly on the land. When selecting a campsite, choose a site where rocks or trees will screen it from others view. Keep noise down in camp so as not to disturb other campers or those passing by on the trail.

Bright clothing and equipment, such as tents, that can be seen for long distances are discouraged. Especially in open natural areas, colors such as day-glow yellow may contribute to a crowded feeling; consider earth-toned colors (ie. browns and greens) to lessen visual impacts.

If you have any questions about anything in this info pack, please talk to your guide. They will be able to answer any questions you have and help you to be in the wilderness ethically and to...

Leave No Trace.

Thank you.

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