



# Leave No Trace on the Appalachian Trail



These “Leave No Trace” principles and techniques will help you enjoy the Appalachian Trail while minimizing impact to the environment and the experience of other visitors.



**APPALACHIAN TRAIL**  
CONSERVANCY®

[www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org)

## PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

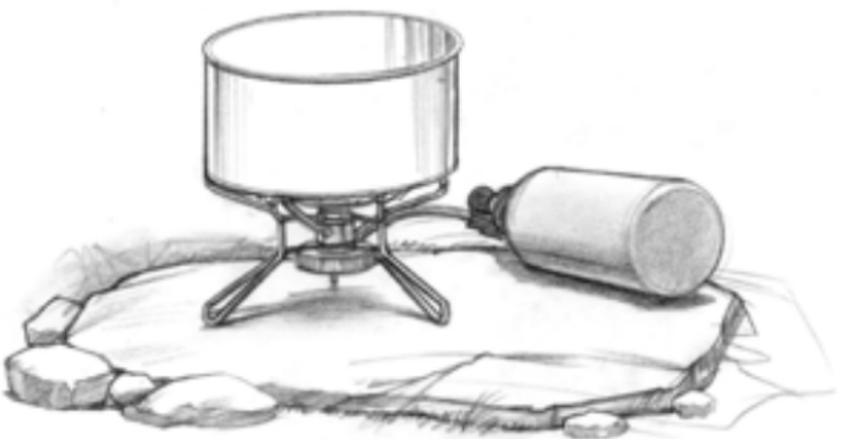
Failure to prepare in advance may put you, others, and the environment at risk.

- Regulations about camping, fires and group size vary along the A.T. Know the regulations and key information for the areas you plan to visit.
- Bring the clothes and gear you'll need for protection from heat, sun, cold, wind and rain.
- Bring maps, a reliable guidebook, and a stove and be sure you know how to use them.
- Carry a litter bag and use it. Bring a light-weight trowel for burying human waste.
- Carry a tent or tarp; don't rely entirely on shelters.

## MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS

Campfires reduce wood that replenishes soils and provides habitat for wildlife. Burning trash releases toxic chemicals.

- Use stoves for cooking and leave the hatchets and saws at home.
- Use existing fire rings to build a small fire only where it is legal and safe.
- Collect small amounts of dead and downed wood that is no bigger than your wrist.
- Burn all wood to ash and be sure that the fire is out and cool to the touch before leaving the site.
- Don't burn trash. Pack it out!





## **LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND**

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

- Take only photos. Leave natural, cultural and historical features undisturbed.
- Don't write or carve on signs, shelters, bridges, trees, rocks, or historic objects.
- Use rubber tips on trekking poles to help avoid trail soil erosion and scratch marks on rocks.
- Don't build new structures or dig trenches.

## **TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES**

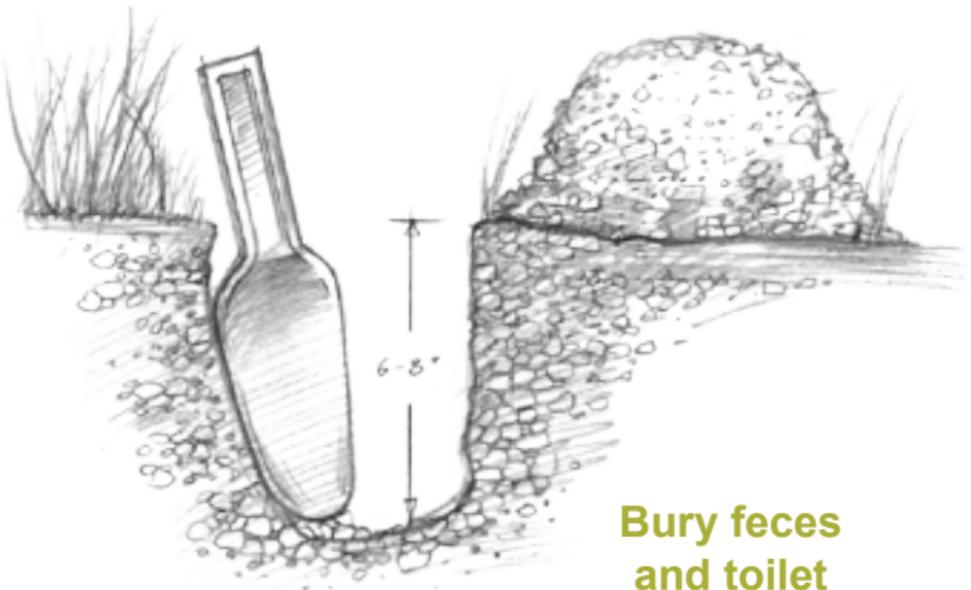
A careless step can start a trend of impact.

- Concentrate activities on durable surfaces like rock, bare soil and grass.
- Follow special camping and campfire regulations where they exist.
- Use existing campsites that are out of sight of the Trail and at least 200 feet (80 steps) from water.
- Stay on the Trail: shortcutting and switchbacks cause harmful erosion.
- Remove fallen branches from the Trail rather than going around and creating a new path.

## DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

Improper waste disposal can spread disease, attract wildlife and spoil the experience for others visitors.

- Carry out all trash and food scraps to avoid attracting wildlife.
- Disperse grey water (toothpaste, strained dishwater and bath water) at least 100 feet (40 steps) from campsites and shelter and 200 feet from water sources. Same goes for urine.
- Use a privy only for human waste and toilet paper. Pack out disposable wipes and hygiene products.



**Bury feces  
and toilet  
paper in  
a hole 6-8  
inches deep.**

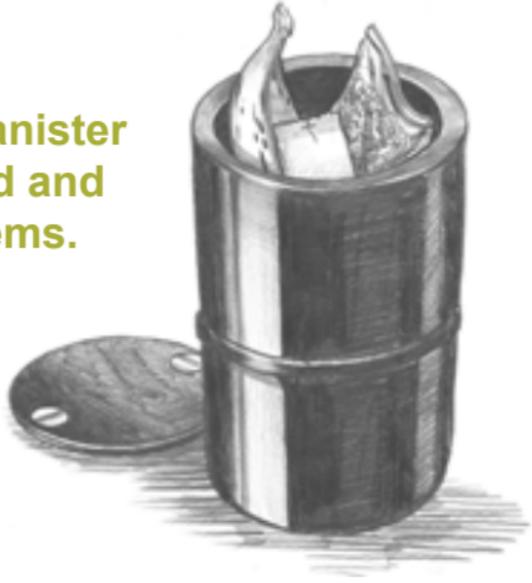
- In the absence of a privy, bury fecal waste (humans and pets) in a 6-8 inch hole at least 200 feet from campsites, shelters, water sources and the Trail.
- Bury toilet paper with your waste or, preferably, pack it out.
- Leave any donated items or unwanted gear at designated hiker boxes in town, rather than at campsites or shelters.

## RESPECT WILDLIFE

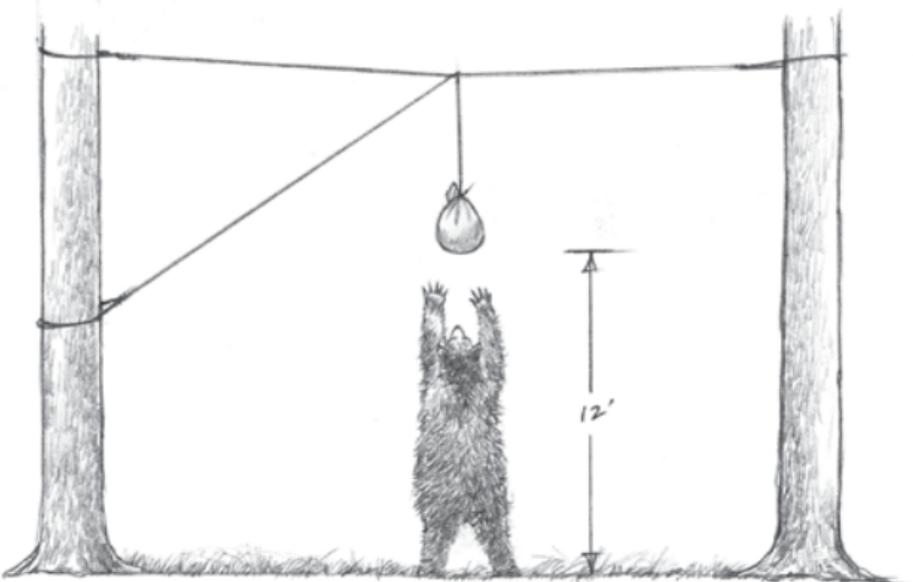
Take steps to minimize your influence on wildlife behavior.

- Avoid feeding wildlife intentionally or unintentionally to prevent attraction and habituation.
- Store food, garbage and scented items out of reach of animals using approved food storage devices like a bear canister.

**Use a bear canister to store food and scented items.**



- Or hang your food at least 12 feet from the ground and 6 feet out from a limb or trunk.



- Leash and control your pets at all times or leave them at home.
- Observe wildlife and farm animals from a distance.



## BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS

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

- Respect nature's quiet and others' wilderness experience by keeping loud voices and noise to a minimum.
- Refrain from using cell phones or audio equipment around others.
- Share scenic vistas and shelters. Be welcoming and limit how long you stay.
- Ask before bringing a dog into the shelter. Bury your dog's waste as your own, or pack it out.
- Step off on a durable surface when resting or allowing others to pass.



**APPALACHIAN TRAIL**  
CONSERVANCY®

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy is a Leave No Trace Master Educator Course Provider. Learn more about our courses and watch video demonstrations at:  
[www.appalachiantrail.org/LNT](http://www.appalachiantrail.org/LNT)

**Instagram:** #ATLNT #TrailKarma #LeaveNoTrace

**Facebook:** Appalachian Trail Leave No Trace

Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics:  
[www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org)

**Photo Credits:** Marian Orlousky & Bonnie Miller