

Selecting a Campsite

Where you put your tent matters.

At the end of a long day of hiking, nothing could be more relaxing than setting up a proper campsite for the evening. Without due consideration, however, we may ultimately damage the environment as well as endanger ourselves when selecting a place to rest our packs. Luckily, a few simple tips as well as a bit of common sense should help you avoid any trouble.

- **Check your surroundings** before you remove anything from your backpack. Take a minute to look up and down, left and right at where you might want to put up a tent or cooking area. Could that dead branch or dead tree crash down on the tent during a gusty night? Is that a mound of dirt or an ant pile?
- **Think like a plant.** While that bed of flowers looks like a comfortable sleeping spot, putting a tent on top of them will smother the flowers and ruin the beauty of the campsite for others to come. Opt for dead leaves or pine needles instead. Follow Leave No Trace principles and camp in established locations and on durable surfaces.
- **Think like a raindrop or a gust of wind.** No matter what the forecast, you should always be prepared for adverse weather conditions. Don't make the mistake of putting your sleeping bag in the middle of a valley or at the bottom of the hill, where a rainy night will leave you and your gear soaked. Be especially alert in canyon country; flash floods may occur without warning. Also, large boulders in some parts of the country or bushes in others can prevent strong winds from ripping through your campsite.



- **Be respectful of others.** When camping in more crowded areas, try to give other hikers a little space away from your site as a sort of buffer zone. Be sure to camp away from trails and other campers.
- **Keep your supplies close...** but your water closer. If you choose a campsite that is a half mile from a source of water, you will be wasting a lot of extra effort to cook meals and fill up your water bottle. The flip side of having water right next to the campsite is the extra hike every time you need to relieve yourself since you should go 200 feet from any water source. Use common sense and find some sort of middle ground.



Keep in mind that whenever using a site that has been frequented often by other hikers, you should try to reuse areas that have already been slept on to minimize the environmental impact. Doing this, the campsite will be around for a long while for all to enjoy.

