

Overlanding 101: Reduce Your Impact



The seven principles of Leave No Trace:

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of others

Plan ahead and prepare: Plan your route; check weather and trail conditions; bring plenty of food, water, and supplies; double-check your packing list; have a plan for trash; know how you'll navigate; and bring destination-specific supplies.

Travel and camp on durable surfaces: Stay on designated trails, roads, or campsites if they exist. If not, drive, park, and camp on durable surfaces like dirt or gravel or in spaces that look like they've been used for camping before. In the western U.S., be extra careful to stay off of living soil (also known as cryptobiotic crust).

Dispose of waste properly: If you brought it with you, you absolutely must bring it back out. That includes trash like food wrappers, but also fruit and vegetable skins, peels, and leftovers. "Waste" also refers to bodily waste and toilet paper.

According to Outside Online, a growing number of outdoor land managers and scientists are no longer recommending that recreational users bury their poop, citing the increase in campers and hikers as well as scientific research and studies. Instead, they recommend using WAG (waste) bags, which are designed to collect and carry human waste. Bring along a portable toilet or dig a cat hole 6 to 8 inches deep to go in if it's permitted where you're camping—always look up local and campground regulations before burying your waste outdoors.

Leave what you find: Leave rocks, flowers, and even old man-made items where you found them. Native wildlife may be using those things for food or shelter, or the items could be of archeological importance.

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Minimize campfire impacts: If you're allowed to build a fire where you're camping, build it in a fire pit (if there is one) and keep it small and contained. If you'll be collecting wood instead of buying it, make sure you're only collecting dead wood you find on the ground and that it's no bigger around than your wrist. Then, build your fire on a durable surface and don't leave it unattended. Douse it so thoroughly that you can stick your hand over the soggy coals.

Respect wildlife: Stay 25 yards away from animals like deer, moose, and bison, and 100 yards from bears, mountain lions, and wolves. Never feed wild animals. This can kill wildlife and make them reliant on free meals that aren't a part of their usual diet. Properly store your food in your car or a critter-proof cooler, and don't leave food unattended.

Be considerate of others: Turn off your music or turn it down so you're the only one who can hear it, don't shine your high beams at someone else's tent, and respect quiet hours by keeping your voice down when people nearby might be sleeping. Offer help or assistance to others and be friendly.

