8. Backcountry Brochures – "Explore Shenandoah's Backcountry," Shenandoah National Park

Backcountry Camping Regulations

A Backcountry Camping Permit is required for all backcountry camping. The permit can be obtained at visitor contact stations during business hours. Permits for Appalachian Trail long-distance hikers are available by self-registration on the Trail near Shenandoah National Park entry points.

If you are planning your visit well in advance, permits are also available by mail from Park Headquarters. Write: Shenandoah National Park, Attn: Backcountry Camping Permit, 3655 U.S. Highway 211 East, Luray, VA 22835. Or call (540) 999-3500. Provide your name, complete address, entry and exit dates of trip, number in party, and trip itinerary, including trail areas in which you will camp. At the park, permits will be issued only between the hours of sunrise and one hour before sunset.

Backcountry Campsite Regulations: When selecting an area to camp in, look for and try to camp on pre-existing campsites out of sight of trails and roads. Please do not create new campsites.

- **Pre-existing Campsites** have been created and established by prior visitor use and are not posted or signed. You must camp at least 20 yards from a park trail or an unpaved fire road.

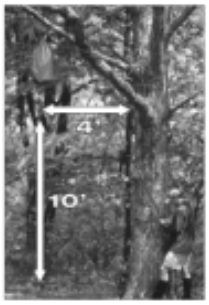
- **Dispersed Camping.** If you cannot locate a pre-existing campsite, you may camp on a previously undisturbed area. Please use "pristine site camping" Leave No Trace practices to minimize the impacts of your campsite. Limit your stay to one night and camp well out of sight of trails and roads and other camping groups. Otherwise, "Pre-existing Campsite" regulations apply.

- **Designated Campsites** are park-constructed and posted to concentrate backcountry camping at specific high-use sites. Presently, designated campsites are provided only at Appalachian Trail huts to accommodate overflow camping.

Designated Campsites are identified by a post with this symbol

Backcountry campfires are not permitted: (except at pre-constructed fireplaces at backcountry huts and day-use shelters.)

Maximum group size is limited to 10 people: Groups larger than 10 people must divide into smaller groups, obtain separate permits for each group, and camp separately as different groups. Large groups significantly affect the sense of solitude of other backcountry visitors and have a greater impact on natural resources.



Food must be stored in one (or more) of the following places:

- Hang food in a tree at least 10 feet above the ground and 4 feet horizontally from the tree trunk.
- Hang food on a storage pole provided at backcountry huts.
- Store food in a park-approved, bear-resistant food storage canister. Presently, several companies manufacture canisters which are of a design acceptable for use in Shenandoah National Park.

Camping is permitted in specific backcountry facilities: The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) maintains a system of backcountry huts and cabins in Shenandoah National Park. Huts are three-sided structures along the Appalachian Trail and are operated by PATC for use by long-term hikers. Backcountry camping permits are required for camping in huts and all park backcountry regulations apply. Permits are not required for cabins, which are reserved in advance from PATC. For additional information about PATC cabins, call (703) 242-0693.

Areas closed to all camping: For distance measured in "yards," figure that one yard is equal to one of your long strides. For example, to camp at least 10 yards from a stream, take 10 long strides from the streambank and then several more to be sure you are complying with the regulation.

No camping may occur:

- Within 10 yards of a stream or other natural water source.
- Within 50 yards of standing buildings and ruins, including stone foundations, chimneys, and log walls. The park has a rich cultural history. Camping in the area of former homesites endangers the preservation of those resources.

- Within 1/4 mile of a paved road, park boundary, or park facilities such as a campground, picnic area, visitor center, lodge, wayside, or restaurant.
- Within 100 yards of a hut, cabin, or day-use shelter. You may camp in a hut or cabin as described in this bulletin. Camping may occur in park-constructed designated campsites at Appalachian Trail huts.

CAMPING DISTANCES GUIDE

- **The following areas are closed to all camping.** These areas are closed to backcountry camping to preserve special resource conditions and values. They can be identified on maps and are identified by signs on trails accessing the areas.

  Limberlost Trail Area (bounded by the Whiteoak Canyon Fire Road, the Skyland-Big Meadows Horse Trail, and Skyline Drive).
  Hawksbill Mountain Summit (area over 3,600 feet elevation).
  Whiteoak Canyon (between the Skyland-Big Meadows Horse Trail and the Cedar Run Link Trail).
  Old Rag Mountain Summit (area over 2,800 feet elevation).
  Big Meadows (Big Meadows clearing area within view of Skyline Drive).
  Rapidan Camp (no camping within 1/2 mile of buildings).

Camping may not exceed 2 nights in one campsite location or 14 consecutive nights in the backcountry.

Properly dispose of human waste. Defecation within 20 yards of streams, trails, or roads is prohibited. If designated facilities are provided, use them. Solid human waste must be buried in a hole at least 3 inches deep. Burying solid waste at least 3 inches in soil minimizes the potential for waste material washing into nearby water sources and eliminates the visual impact and odor of human waste.

Carry all trash out of the backcountry and properly dispose of it. "Pack it in; pack it out." Enhance the backcountry experience for all visitors by keeping it clean. Carelessly discarded food scraps and trash may be harmful to wildlife. Leave glass containers at home.

Pets must be leashed at all times and are not permitted on some trails. More information is available at visitor centers.