

Back Country Safety Tips

Plumas National Forest
Beckwourth Ranger District



Get Prepared

Prepare yourself for a wonderful experience enjoying the outdoors. It's very likely the better prepared one is, the more rewarding the experience.

Come with a plan that includes where you're going, how to get there and how to get back. Plan for unexpected situations. For example, bring a first aid kit, map, and compass and know how to use them. Always leave a detailed itinerary with a friend that includes who they should contact in an emergency.

Though beautiful, this is a primitive place and you are on your own. Check with the local ranger station for road, trail, fire and weather conditions. Knowing the experience and ability levels of yourself and companions will prevent over doing it and help in having a positive experience.



National Forests are here for your enjoyment. This is your land. Make every effort to leave it as you found it and ready to be enjoyed by others.

- **T** Travel Responsibly by staying on designated trails
- **R**espect the rights of others
- **E**ducate yourself
- **A**void sensitive areas
- **D**o your part by modeling appropriate behavior

For more information visit;

<https://www.treadlightly.org/>



Treating The Water

Though clear, cool and refreshing, natural occurring water carries with it parasites, bacteria and viruses that may cause illness. Always consider water needs for your adventure. Because water is heavy, many back country travelers bring along water treatment techniques that reduce the weight they have to carry.

The following information comes from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- **Heat** - most germs die very quickly at high temperatures. Boil water for at least 1 minute. Increase boiling time with increased elevation.
- **Chemicals** - Many over the counter products are available that combine disinfectants such as chlorine and iodine. Follow manufacturer instructions.
- **Filters** - Most filters will remove bacteria from water and some will also remove viruses.
- **Ultraviolet Light** - Effective for small amounts of clear water. Reduced effectiveness with cloudy water.

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Bear Awareness

Black Bears are common in the back country. Most likely making your presence known and taking precautions with food will prevent encounters with bears. Remember that the bear is at home and you are the visitor. By being responsible you will protect yourself, protect others and keep these animals wild.

Stay in a group when hiking. If a bear is encountered on trail make your presence known, and back away slowly. Never run from a bear.

Prevent bear encounters in camp by separating sleeping area, food preparation area, washing area and food storage area by 200 feet.

- Do not leave food out. It will attract bears and other wildlife. Clean the food preparation area as soon as possible.
- Never keep food in the sleeping area. Bears are also attracted by scented items such as lotions, cosmetics and toiletries. Do not keep clothing used while cooking in the sleeping area.
- Store food in a bear resistant canister or by hanging from a branch 15 feet up and 10 feet from the base of the tree. Hanging food can be one of the most difficult chores while backpacking. Bears climb trees and can get hanging food.

If a bear does not immediately leave the area it may simply be curious. Slowly back away. Make loud noises. Yell, "Get out of here bear!" to alert other travelers. Make yourself look big. Remain calm.

If a bear attacks experts recommend that you fight back. Do not play dead.

Sanitation

Effective sanitary practices should be followed to prevent spreading disease. Maintain sanitary conditions whenever handling food.

All human waste should be 200 feet away from water, camp and trails. Solid human waste should in addition be buried at least 8 inches deep.

Pack out all garbage, leftover food and litter.

Hypothermia

Caused by a rapid loss of body heat, hypothermia is the most dangerous illness of back country travel. It can strike on a balmy day, under conditions you'd least expect. Often victims don't recognize the symptoms, simply because they can't believe hypothermia could strike under comparatively mild travel conditions. The victim may have to rely on fellow travelers to spot symptoms and act to insure recovery.