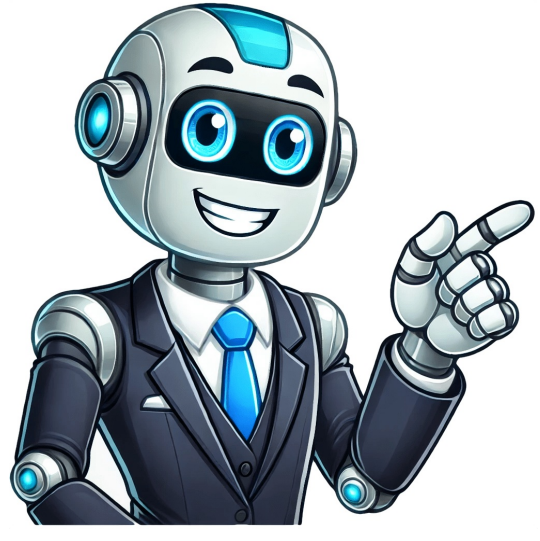


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Camping in national forests

From luxury hot tub cabins to off-grid nature experiences, book a stay in the forest and make memories.Get inspired, view some of our favourite special places to stay. Welcome to the U.S. National Forest Campground Guide Web site. Whether you are interested in car camping, RV camping or tent camping in America, you will find the type of information you need to have when planning a camping trip. With up to 55 fields of information in each campground review, lots of camping pictures, and authors who have actually visited the camping locations, you should not have to go anywhere else to plan great camping vacations. Click on the "National Forests & Campgrounds" tab to the left for campground information. Click on the "Bookstore" tab, also to the left, for purchasing our Ebooks. Click here for a table comparing information available on this website vs. the Ebooks. As of May 9, 2012, Fred and Suzi Dow have completed research on 155 national forests, 20 national grasslands, 1 national tallgrass prairie and 2,383 developed campgrounds. Some information also provided for dispersed camping locations. Research of campgrounds with 10 or more designated sites in all national forests in the U.S.A. is completed. The authors are NOT employed by the Forest Service. Visit "Camping with Suzi" for her experiences while researching national forest campgrounds - blog, articles, recipes, storybook photo albums, and more. An aerial view of Wasdale Campsite and Wastwater, Cumbria | © National Trust/Robin KitchinDiscover our range of camping holidays across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and wake up surrounded by nature in some of the most idyllic places. From tent campsites beside peaceful lakes to pitches at the base of mountains, you'll find the perfect spot for any type of camping holiday.* Book a pitch at any of our campsites before 30 June 2025, and kids go free. New bookings only, made and taken from 13/02/25 to 30/06/25. If stay continues after 30/06/25, nights from 01/07/25 charged at the standard rate. Offer not valid on group bookings. Offer applied automatically at checkout. Subject to availability and may be withdrawn at any time. Standard Holidays terms and conditions apply. Image: Low Wray Campsite, CumbriaArticleTake a look at our best places to camp in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and find a campsite near you.ArticleFor a bit of added comfort on your camping holiday, glamping offers that back-to-nature experience without the effort of putting up a tent. Our glamping options range from camping pods to safari tents, yurts and hammocks.ArticleLooking for a caravan site in the UK to bring your own home on wheels? Touring caravans and motorhomes are welcome at many of our campsites. Bring boots, bikes and surfboards and set out for an adventure, or just put your feet up and take in the views.Great Langdale Campsite has won the Campsite of the Year category in the The Great Outdoors Reader Awards 2025. The team at Great Langdale works hard to deliver the best possible experience for campsite guests and to bring people closer to the nature, beauty and history of this National Park and World Heritage area. Image: Great Langdale Campsite, CumbriaVideoFollow a family on four different holidays throughout the year: a spring camping trip, a summer beach holiday, a romantic getaway for autumn, and a festive get-together. Featured: Hafod y Llan Campsite, Gwynedd - Seaview, Dorset - Cartref, Gwynedd - Emley Farmhouse, SurreyArticleFind out more about making a booking for an organised group, such as your school, Duke of Edinburgh group or walking club. Please note that group camps are for organisations with a designated camp leader - they are not suitable for groups of family and friends.Many of our campsites are also dog-friendly, meaning your dog can join in on the camping holiday adventure. Explore the great outdoors on walks through the countryside, hilltop hikes or seaside rambles when you book a stay at one of our dog-friendly campsites.If you're a lover of the coast, you can't go wrong with a tent holiday that's on a beach campsite. Spend your days exploring hidden coves, strolling along sandy beaches, taking to the waves or rock-pooling with family and friends. Some of these tent campsites also welcome campervans and caravans.Pitch up at the pub after a weary day of travelling or exploring. Unwind with your favourite drink at one of the local pubs that are located near our campsites.ArticleIf you're planning on camping with us, you can read the terms and conditions that apply to our camping, caravan, campervan, motorhome and glamping sites.With locations across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, our campsites offer beautiful holiday spots that are perfect for exploring the great outdoors. Camping in national forests can be a great way to experience nature and get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. However, there are important rules and regulations that all campers need to be aware of before they go. In this article, I'm going to discuss the different regulations that should be followed when camping in national forests so you can have an enjoyable and safe trip. Whether you're a novice or an experienced camper, it's always important to familiarize yourself with the rules of your destination before you set out on your journey. I'll provide information about camping permits, fire safety measures, wildlife protection guidelines, and other important regulations that you should know before you go camping in national forests. With this knowledge in hand, you'll have everything you need for a successful camping adventure! Camping Permits Camping in the national forests is a great way to explore the outdoors and truly get away from it all. Did you know that over 7 million people camp in national forests each year? That's an incredible amount of people taking advantage of all that nature has to offer! When camping in a national forest, there are several rules and regulations you should be aware of. One important rule is obtaining a camping permit before setting up camp. Depending on the area, permits can be obtained online or at a ranger station. A valid permit allows campers to stay for up to 14 days at a time and must be renewed if staying longer. It's also important to note that certain equipment restrictions may apply, such as no open fires or off-road vehicles. Occupancy limits are also in place which vary depending on the campsite size and location; so make sure to check with a ranger beforehand if possible. It goes without saying that respecting nature is paramount when camping in the national forests. This means leaving no trace behind by properly disposing of trash, recycling where available, following local fire regulations, and avoiding any contact with wildlife wherever possible. By following these rules and regulations, everyone is sure to have an enjoyable experience while exploring our amazing national forests! Fire Safety Measures Camping in a national forest requires knowledge and adherence to proper fire safety measures. Fire prevention is the first step in ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for all visitors. This means keeping campfires small, away from combustible materials, and never leaving them unattended. Always make sure that your fire is fully extinguished before leaving the campsite. Fire extinguishing is just as important as fire prevention when camping in a national forest. It's essential to have the right tools on hand to put out any fires that may arise, such as buckets of water or sand, shovels, and fire extinguishers. Additionally, it's important to be aware of your surroundings at all times so that any flare-ups can be addressed quickly and effectively. It's also wise to check with local authorities about any existing fire bans or restrictions before heading out into the woods. Staying informed about local regulations allows you to ensure that your campsite remains safe and compliant with laws. By following these simple steps, you can ensure a smooth and safe camping experience in a national forest. Wildlife Protection Guidelines Now that you understand the importance of fire safety when camping in national forests, it's time to discuss wildlife protection guidelines. While exploring beautiful national forests, we also need to protect its inhabitants. Did you know that there are over 300 species of mammals and 600 species of birds living in US forests? It is important to remember that these animals call this area home and have the right to peacefully exist without disturbance from humans. When camping in a national forest, always follow wildlife viewing etiquette. That means staying at least 100 yards away from animals and never feeding them or leaving any food scraps behind. This helps maintain their natural behaviors and protects them from potential harm due to human interaction. Remember: conservation efforts start with us! Additionally, be aware of your surroundings for signs of protected species such as nesting grounds or den sites. Avoiding these areas will help minimize stress on animals and ensure their safety in their habitat. By taking the necessary precautions and following proper etiquette, we can all do our part to protect wildlife while enjoying the beauty of nature safely together. Trash Disposal Regulations Burning trash is strictly prohibited in national forests. It's important to remember to bring a trash bag and pack out whatever you bring in. Recycling is encouraged and there are often designated areas for it in the forests. I always recommend to my campers to double-check what can and cannot be recycled in a particular national forest. All food waste should be disposed of properly, either in a trash can or through pack-out. Pack-out is a great way to help reduce the amount of trash in the forests and should be done whenever possible. Finally, always remember to check the local regulations for any special trash disposal rules when camping in a national forest. Burning When camping in national forests, it's important to know the rules and regulations regarding trash disposal. Burning is a popular way of getting rid of waste, but it's important to make sure you do it safely. First and foremost, check with local forest rangers to find out what types of burning are allowed in the area. Make sure you follow all safety procedures when building a campfire or bonfire, including adhering to the camping etiquette of not leaving it unattended. When sourcing firewood, never take more wood than you need for your trip; try to use downed trees or dead branches instead. This helps keep our forests healthy and ensures there'll be plenty of firewood for others who come after us. Remember: don't leave any trace of your burning activities when you move on – put out all fires completely before packing up and hitting the trail! Pack-Out Once you've burned everything you can, it's important to remember the camping etiquette of pack-out. This means that whatever garbage and waste you brought in with you should also be packed out with you. Food storage is especially important, as leaving food scraps behind could attract wildlife. Make sure to store any food or cooking utensils in bear-resistant containers and keep them away from your sleeping area at night. Don't forget about the trash; anything that can't be burned should be bagged up and taken home with you. Taking a few extra minutes to properly dispose of your waste will help keep our forests beautiful for future campers. So when you're done camping, take a moment to make sure everything is tidied up before hitting the trail! Recycling Recycling is a great way to practice sustainable backcountry camping. It's important to find out which materials can be recycled in your area and to bring the right containers for sorting. Many national forests have recycling services available for aluminum, paper, cardboard, plastic, and glass items. If you're camping in an area without recycling, make sure to bring extra bags with you so that you can properly dispose of any recyclables when you get back home. Doing this will help reduce waste and keep our forests beautiful for future generations. Plus, it's an easy way to do your part for the environment! Rules For Building Campfires When building campfires while camping in national forests, it's important to make sure you select the right spot. Choose a spot that is cleared of all debris and vegetation and has at least 10 feet of clearance around your campfire. Never build a fire near any flammable objects such as tents or vehicles. You should also make sure that your campfire is not located near any bodies of water or wetlands. Gathering firewood is also essential for creating an effective campfire. When gathering firewood, make sure to only take sticks and branches from the ground – never cut down trees or branches for fuel! Also, remember to collect more than enough firewood for your needs; this will ensure that you have enough fuel to keep your fire burning throughout the night. Additionally, leave some of the wood behind so that other campers can use it too. Before leaving the campsite, make sure to put out the fire completely with water and/or dirt. Make sure there are no smoldering embers left behind, as these can quickly spark up a wildfire if left unattended. When done correctly, building and maintaining a campfire can be a great way to stay warm and enjoy the outdoors during your camping trip in national forests. Frequently Asked Questions What Is The Best Time Of Year To Camp In A National Forest? As the adage goes, "Timing is everything" and that holds true when it comes to camping in a national forest. The best time of year to camp in a national forest depends largely on one's preference for weather conditions and fire safety. Generally, late spring and early fall tend to be the most ideal times for camping due to milder temperatures and lower risk of wildfires. During these periods, the weather can provide comfortable conditions for enjoying outdoor activities like fishing, hiking, or simply relaxing by a campfire. Additionally, some areas may have additional restrictions due to local wildlife or other environmental concerns so always check with your local ranger station before planning your trip. Are There Any Restrictions On The Number Of People Allowed To Camp In A National Forest? When it comes to the number of people allowed to camp in a national forest, there are restrictions in place. The maximum amount of people per party that is allowed is typically six people at a time, with some exceptions depending on the particular area. It's important to be aware of firewood usage and hunting regulations as well, since these activities can also be limited for the protection of the environment. Is It Permissible To Have Pets While Camping In A National Forest? Ah, the great outdoors! Nothing quite like a camping trip in a national forest with your four-legged friend, right? But before you go, make sure you know the pet friendly policies. All pets must be on a leash at all times and certain gear requirements must be met to keep both you and your pup safe. So why wait? Get out there and enjoy the fresh air with your furry companion! Are There Any Designated Campsites In National Forests? Yes, there are designated campsites in national forests! Many of them provide a peaceful and serene atmosphere for wildlife viewing and recreation. When choosing a campsite, it's important to consider the weather conditions and other potential hazards. Be sure to check the National Forest Service website for specific rules and regulations regarding campground use. Are There Any Fees Associated With Camping In A National Forest? When camping in a national forest, you may be required to pay certain fees. These can include firewood fees as well as other recreational activities such as fishing or hunting. You may also be asked to follow the Leave No Trace principles, which encourages responsible outdoor recreation by minimizing one's impact on the environment. It's important to check with the local ranger station for specifics on any fees or regulations that may apply to your camping trip. Conclusion The best time to visit a National Forest is in the summer months, when you can take advantage of the warm weather and all the activities available. Camping in National Forests is an amazing experience that everyone should try at least once! Just make sure you know the rules and regulations before you go. Be sure to check for designated campsites, as well as restrictions on the number of people and any fees associated with camping there. You can even bring your furry friends – just be sure to keep them leashed! All in all, camping in a National Forest can be a great way to get away from it all and really "rough it" in nature. So don't hesitate – grab your tent, snacks, and binoculars and hit the trails now! For more camping gears visit Happier Camping FacebookTwitterPinterestMail This article is brought to you by Banner & Oak, a company with deep expertise in headwear. Their mens' snapback trucker hats are the perfect addition to your next camping trip. There's nothing quite like waking up in a quiet forest that's sparkling with morning dew — the world is nearly silent, besides the birds and maybe some morning raindrops falling on your tent. If you camped there for free, the experience is even sweeter. This is dispersed camping in a national forest. Those who are willing to forgo a few luxuries will find extra solitude and scarcely touched wilderness in our national forests, where you can often find free camping. "Dispersed camping," as it's called, is legal camping in undeveloped campsites, often just off of forest access roads. Dispersed camping in national forests requires a little more effort than pulling up to an established campground. Forest access roads aren't always easy to find, and you'll have to be willing to search for a good spot to park. But finding that perfect slice of wilderness to call home for the night is a truly special kind of camping. The Dyrtr PRO Map Layers are great for finding free, dispersed camping across the US. Sometimes this looks like individual marked campsites along a forest road, and sometimes it looks like camping on the forest floor away from roads and streams. With millions of acres of public land in the US, it's a great option for last-minute, no-frills camping. View this post on Instagram A post shared by 6poundtrout (@6poundtrout) Dispersed camping in national forests is a great way to save money on your outdoor adventures. But it also protects more popular places from overcrowding and damage (assuming you practice Leave No Trace principles and leave your site as you found it). Similar to backpacking, you'll have to be self-contained (there are rarely toilets, sinks, or running water when dispersed camping) and you almost definitely won't have nearby neighbors. That being said, dispersed camping in national forests typically means parking at a primitive campsite or in a pull-off, just off of a forest access road. So unlike backpacking, you will have your car nearby and you won't have to hike far to set up camp. If you're interested in exploring a wilder side to camping, this is a good first step. Dispersed camping in national forests might become your new favorite way to sleep outside. What is a National Forest? At first glance, national forests and national parks appear to be similar, since they are both public, protected landscapes. However, there are a few differences to be aware of. First and foremost, they are managed by different government entities. National forests are managed by the Department of Agriculture. The USDA Forest Service is charged with upholding the mission of National Forests: to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the land. National parks often have stricter rules about pets and dispersed camping. The National Forests allow both pets and dispersed camping throughout most of their land holdings. What is BLM Land? BLM, or the Bureau of Land Management, is an agency within the US Department of the Interior. They support several different programs on their land holdings including grazing, mining, and recreation. Since we're talking about camping, we are going to focus on the recreational holdings within the BLM land system. Most of the information about dispersed camping in national forests also applies to BLM land, but we'll be focusing on national forests in this article. View this post on Instagram A post shared by Hathi Van (@hathi_van) Where Can You Find Free Dispersed Camping? Free camping, or dispersed camping, is allowed in all national forests, unless noted otherwise. You can find places to camp on the side of main roads, or follow forest access roads (often gravel or dirt) to more remote sites. There's also the option to backpack in for several miles and find a quiet site away from any roads or people. These "sites" are available on a first-come, first-serve basis and cannot be reserved in advance. If you're in a pinch you can use the offline maps and campgrounds of The Dyrtr PRO to find the BLM land near you. The general rule is to camp 100-200 feet away from any road, trail, or water source. If a previous campsite is visible, using that site will minimize impact to the area. What Can I Expect From Dispersed Campsites in National Forests? Dirt. Trees. Bugs. Views. What more can you ask for? Free camping in National Forests, or dispersed camping, is about enjoying nature without all the fuss and clutter of amenities, like toilets, showers, and fire pits. (These amenities are great sometimes. We also love developed campgrounds. But dispersed camping is a different kind of camping experience.) This means you need to arrive fully self-sufficient, and prepared to clean up after yourself thoroughly. If you're in bear territory, remember that dispersed camping won't come with bear lockers. Bring odor-proof storage for your food, and store food away from your camp. Since you're camping in a place that hasn't been altered for camping, it typically won't be as flat or clutter-free as traditional campsites. If you're pitching a tent, you'll probably want a sleeping pad for added comfort. How Do I Find a Dispersed Campsite? Finding a campground is easy when you're looking for developed areas. Here at The Dyrtr, we specialize in helping you find campgrounds. Finding spots for dispersed camping is a little different. Select an area of interest within National Forest Land and use Google Earth in satellite view to check your route for pull-offs. A great idea is to pick a trailhead and look nearby. A dirt pull off or small clearing in a forest is an indicator of an existing camp spot. Once you have an idea of where you'd like to camp, check with the local ranger station for any local camping or fire restrictions. Sometimes, especially during the off-seasons, forest access roads are closed, so check in advance to be sure that your route is clear. Want an adventure of your own? Find free camping near you Did you know that almost all states in the US have free camping? Although, some of it is not-so-great and can be hard to find. There is an easier way: Hand-picked free campsites Pre-saved to your phone The best in all 50 states It's the only hand-picked list of 5,000 free camping locations that you will find anywhere. It comes with a bunch of other features like last-minute camping texts, offline maps, etc. You can check it out for free today by starting a free 7-day trial. After the 7-day trial, the membership is just \$35.99 for a full year of access — well worth it if you camp more than 2 times per year. It's also extremely helpful to have a hard copy map of the national forest you'd like to camp in. These are difficult to find online, but you should be able to pick them up at local gas stations, grocery stores, and ranger stations once you reach your destination. Part of the beauty of dispersed camping is that it isn't advertised on big "Camp Here!" signs. Finding your spot can take some work, even if you do your research. It's especially difficult to find unmarked camping spots in the dark, so leave yourself plenty of daylight to find your campsite and settle in. How Do You Camp Responsibly in National Forests? Many people are drawn to dispersed camping over developed campgrounds because it allows them to feel closer to nature, without the noise, distraction, and potential damage caused by other campers. It's our responsibility to maintain this "untouched" nature by treating it with respect. Make sure you can actually camp in the National Forest area you plan to visit. Always check with local ranger station in the area you will be traveling for any specific regulations. In drier areas, fire bans are typically the most common. Use a camping stove or fire pan rather than building a fire from surrounding resources. For fires, ensure you only use deadfall for firewood. Never cut and burn live trees or bring firewood from another area. Come equipped with a bucket, an axe, and a shovel for properly extinguishing fires. Don't create a new campsite if there's one already available. Be aware of any overnight permits and road conditions before heading out. Follow any laws and regulations regarding pets in these wild spaces. Keep your dog on a leash if required. Expect to pack out all of your trash and waste. Do not camp within 200 feet (70 adult steps) from lakes and streams. Always bury human waste in a cathole six inches deep and 200 feet away from any water source. Follow these guidelines for your pets, as well. And of course, follow all Leave No Trace principles. We've touched on most of those above, but everyone can use a refresher. You should also read up on the USDA guidelines for dispersed camping in national forests. This article is brought to you by Banner & Oak Their ladies hats are the perfect addition to your next camping trip. Related Articles: FacebookTwitterPinterestMail