



# Dispersed Camping

## Eldorado National Forest



If you like to camp away from it all, but you prefer to drive there in your car, the National Forests have just what you are looking for.

**Most of the land in the National Forest** is open to camping free of charge which is referred to as “dispersed” camping. Visitors can camp just about anywhere in the national forest, unless specifically prohibited\*. Maps and staff are available at most Forest Service offices to assist visitors in finding a suitable spot.

**Not being in a developed campground** means that there will not be certain conveniences:

- ◆ **Water Quality:** It is best to bring your own water. Lake, stream or spring water may be contaminated.
- ◆ **Human Waste:** Proper disposal of human waste is important. Leaving human waste in dispersed camping areas can spread disease, lead to contaminated water supplies, contaminate soils, attract wildlife, and spoil a camping area. Portable eco-friendly human waste disposal systems which allow you to safely "Pack It Out" are commercially available and recommended. As a last resort, choose a spot at least 200' away from water sources and campsites, dig a small hole at least six inches deep, and cover it when you are through. Seal your toilet paper in a bag, pack it out, and dispose of it properly.
- ◆ **No trash service** - Pack It In, Pack It Out
- ◆ **Maximum stay limit** for camping is 14 days per district. Please remove all your equipment and garbage when you leave.

**Practice a Leave No Trace! Ethic.**  
 When you leave your campsite,  
 Take all garbage, large and small.  
**PACK IT IN!**  
**PACK IT OUT!**

**The beauty of the natural vegetation** around your campsite is probably why you chose it. Keep it healthy and beautiful by not cutting anything down, not putting nails into trees, and treading carefully in meadow-like areas. Keep your vehicle on designated roads and trails to prevent resource damage. *Vehicles must be parked within one vehicle length of the edge of the surface of a designated road or trail.*

When you pick your spot, make sure that it is at least 100 feet away from streams and lakes, to help protect streamside vegetation, and prevent pollution. Dispersed campsites must be outside the boundary markings of developed campgrounds.

**There are many fine camping spots** you can reach on paved and well-graded dirt roads, but there are some rough, steep, or narrow roads that are dangerous for the family car or for bulky recreation vehicles. Make sure the road you plan to take is safe for your kind of vehicle by first talking it over with Forest Service staff.

### Lakes and Reservoirs

**Boat-in dispersed camping** is permitted on Bear River Reservoir, Union Valley Reservoir, Loon Lake and Hell Hole Reservoir.

**\*Dispersed camping is NOT allowed around the following lakes** because of heavy visitor use, the presence of summer homes, or surrounding private land:

- |                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| ◆ Echo Lake             | ◆ Silver Lake              |
| ◆ Caples Lake           | ◆ Stumpy Meadows Reservoir |
| ◆ Gerle Creek Reservoir | ◆ Woods Lake               |
| ◆ Ice House Reservoir   | ◆ Wrights Lake             |
| ◆ Kirkwood Lake         |                            |

## Campfire Permits

You may want a campfire for cooking, enjoying its warmth, and roasting marshmallows.

**For campfires, stoves, lanterns or barbecues used outside a campground or recreational vehicle and some developed campgrounds, you need a campfire permit.**



The permit is free, valid for a full year from January 1 to December 31, and may be obtained in person from Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, or CAL FIRE offices. Your responsibilities for building and putting out your fire safely are explained on the campfire permit. 36 CFR 261.52 (k) PRC 4433.

**Be aware that as fire danger becomes greater, campfires may be prohibited.** Please check to find out if there are fire restrictions in the area where you intend to camp.

You are welcome to gather dead and down wood to use for your campfire, but not to take home unless you obtain a fuelwood permit.

### Traveling In The Forest

In 2008, roads and trails on the Eldorado were designated for wheeled motor vehicle travel. Vehicle travel off these designated roads and trails is prohibited. In addition:

*All dirt roads and trails are closed to motor vehicle use between January 1 and March 31. The Seasonal Closure may be longer if roads or trails are wet and susceptible to damage. This closure is intended to protect water quality and prevent rutting and damage to these roads and trails. Visit the Forest's website or call one of our offices for current status.*

Approximately 600 miles of paved and gravel roads are not affected by the closure. The Rock Creek area near Georgetown has its own seasonal closure policy and procedures.

The Motor Vehicle Use Map is a free map available at any of the Eldorado National Forest offices and on our website. This map shows the roads and trails on the Eldorado National Forest that are designated for motor vehicle use and which ones are restricted during the seasonal closure.

**Plan ahead by obtaining a National Forest map at one of the following offices:**

#### Placerville Ranger District

7 ½ miles east of Placerville  
on Highway 50 - Cedar Grove exit #54  
4260 Eight Mile Road  
Camino, CA 95709  
(530) 644-2324

#### Pacific Ranger District

16 miles east of Placerville  
on Highway 50 - Mill Run Road  
7887 Highway 50  
Pollock Pines, CA 95726  
(530) 644-2349

#### Amador Ranger District

17 miles east of Jackson  
on Highway 88  
26820 Silver Drive  
Pioneer, CA 95666  
(209) 295-4251

#### Georgetown Ranger District

3 miles east of Georgetown  
on Wentworth Springs Road  
7600 Wentworth Springs Road  
Georgetown, CA 95634  
(530) 333-4312

#### Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

Located 2 miles east of the Highway 50/89 junction in South Lake Tahoe. Turn right on Al Tahoe Blvd., then right at the first signal. 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150. Phone (530) 543-2600

#### Lake Tahoe Forest Service Visitors Center

Located 3 miles north of the Highway 50/89 junction at South Lake Tahoe, on Highway 89. Open summer only. Call for hours.  
(530) 543-2674  
[www.fs.usda.gov/ltbmu](http://www.fs.usda.gov/ltbmu)

## Water Quality

Water quality testing is not performed on open water sources such as lakes, streams and springs. Boil or treat before using.