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:

- **Maximum stay limit** for camping outside of a developed campground is **10 days** per district/per calendar year. Please remove all your equipment and garbage when you leave.
- **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

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

**Practice a Leave No Trace! Ethic.**

When you leave your campsite, Take all garbage, large and small.

PACK IT IN!
PACK IT OUT!
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 extended 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.

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 forest website (see below). This map shows the roads and trails in the Eldorado National Forest that are designated for motor vehicle use, the type of vehicle that can be operated on the routes, and identifies which routes are restricted during the seasonal closure.

Water Quality

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

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.

You can obtain a campfire permit online at www.readyforwildfire.org/permits/campfire-permit/.

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.

To Obtain a National Forest Map
http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/enf/maps

Check for current conditions before you go by contacting us at one of the following offices:

Placerville and Pacific Ranger Districts
7 ½ miles east of Placerville
on Highway 50 – Cedar Grove exit #54
4260 Eight Mile Road
Camino, CA  95709
(530) 644-2324  Main #
209 259-3774  Virtual Office #

Amador Ranger District
17 miles east of Jackson
on Highway 88
26820 Silver Drive
Pioneer, CA  95666
(209) 295-4251 Main #
209 259-3774  Virtual Office #

Georgetown Ranger District
3 miles east of Georgetown
on Wentworth Springs Road
7600 Wentworth Springs Road
Georgetown, CA  95634
(530) 333-4312 Main #
530 334-6477  Virtual Office #

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