

## CAMPING RULES, SAFETY TIPS, AND OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION

### C CAMPGROUND RULES

- **OBEY “QUIET TIME”** - Be a good campground neighbor. Don't make loud noises, especially at night. Posted quiet hours are typically from 10 p.m. – 6 a.m. At other hours, limit the use of generators to no more than one hour at a time.
- **VEHICLE USE** - Motorcycles, ATVs, UTVs, etc. are not allowed inside campgrounds, except for coming and going from your campsite to other locations. Their use is sometimes not allowed on county roads. Drive all vehicles slowly through campground loops and watch closely for pedestrians.
- **HORSES/PACK STOCK** - Those camping with horses should seek out campgrounds with facilities that specifically accommodate pack stock. Most campgrounds do not allow pack stock.
- **DOGS** - Dogs must be leashed or otherwise physically restrained in campgrounds. Do not allow pets to harass visitors, dogs or wildlife. Do not leave pets unattended. Control barking.
- **CAMPFIRES** - Campfires must be inside fire grates provided at campsites. When no one is physically attending a campfire, it must be put out completely. Pour water on the fire and stir ashes until there is no smoke. Fire restrictions in effect will be posted at the entrance.
- **TRASH** - Use trash receptacles provided. Some primitive campgrounds may expect you to pack out your own trash. Do not burn trash, because many materials will not burn to ash and leave debris behind. Leave your campsite clean when you depart.
- **PROTECT VEGETATION** - Do not break off limbs, drive nails into or carve into bark of trees. This allows insects and disease to enter and can weaken or kill trees. Bring firewood with you or check with campground hosts for firewood on sale. If you collect firewood, you may collect only dead wood on the ground. Do not damage shrubs. Walk on dirt or gravel to keep grass and plants alive. Leave wildflowers for others to enjoy.



### RESPECT THE BACKCOUNTRY

- **DESIGNATED WILDERNESS** - The Wilderness Act of 1964 established the National Wilderness Preservation System. The San Juan National Forest has three Congressionally designated Wilderness Areas - the Weminuche, Lizard Head and South San Juan. The Piedra Area is also managed to preserve its Wilderness characteristics. By law, only primitive forms of transportation – foot and stock travel – are allowed in Wilderness (including the Piedra Area). Mountain bicycles and motorized vehicles are prohibited. Wilderness areas are marked at trailhead boundaries and on maps. Sign in at Wilderness trailheads for your safety.
- **LEAVE NO TRACE** - When traveling in the backcountry, follow these tips so that you have as little impact on natural resources as possible: Plan ahead and prepare. Camp and travel on durable surfaces. Dispose of waste properly. Leave what you find. Minimize campfire impacts. Respect wildlife. Be considerate of others.
- **STOP THE SPREAD OF WEEDS** - Weed seeds travel in many ways – on your shoes and clothing, on and in your vehicle, on pets and livestock, and in hay. To help keep campgrounds and trails weed free, all stock feed on public lands in Colorado must have weed-free certification (marked with certified twine, packing or transit certificate). Only weed-free baled hay, cubed or pelletized hay, steamed grain in a processor's stamped bag or weed-free baled mulch made from tree fibers or steamed material may be used on USFS/BLM lands. For more information, contact the Colorado Weed Management Association at 970-887-1228.

- **RESPECT CULTURAL SITES** - Looting, removing or defacing prehistoric and historic artifacts is against federal law. Enjoy these antiquities, but don't damage them. Oil from your hands can harm pictographs – look but don't touch. Don't walk on walls or inside structures. Resist the temptation to pick up artifacts and pile them in one spot – this degrades the historical context of a site. Camping is prohibited in archaeological sites. Historic mining and ranching structures on public lands are often unstable – do not go inside old buildings. Stay out of mine shafts - they can contain dangerous fumes. Many mines are on private lands inside of federal land boundaries – do not trespass.



## **BE CAREFUL WITH FIRE**

Southwestern Colorado may look lush and green, but it is arid country that can be dangerously dry in summer or fall. Be very careful with fire – a spark, a puff of wind, and nearby flammable materials can combine to cause disaster before you even know it.

- Fire restrictions are posted at campground entrances, National Forest entrance signs, and trailheads. Check with campground hosts or with San Juan Public Lands offices.
- In campgrounds, fires are allowed in fire grates only.
- In dispersed areas outside campgrounds, consider using a camping stove instead of building a fire. Don't create new fire rings - use an existing fire ring or a camp stove. Fire rings sterilize the soil and scar the scenery.
- Put fires out every time you leave camp or go to bed. Pour water over ashes and stir until cold. Stir wet ashes until there is no smoke or heat. Clean out the fire pit and disperse wet ashes.
- Do not burn trash. Some items are harmful to the environment. Plastics and tin will not burn to ash, and the resulting debris is difficult to clean up.
- Do not park hot vehicles over dry grass. Do not toss cigarette butts, and extinguish smokes in a safe manner.

## ^ **WATER SAFETY**

- **BOATING** - Colorado requires that all boats be registered. Registration is offered at Navajo and Ridgway State Parks. Some reservoirs have boating restrictions or permit requirements. Others allow only hand-propelled boats or those with electric trolling motors. McPhee and Lemon Reservoirs are managed by the U.S. Forest Service; Vallecito Reservoir by the Pine River Irrigation District; Williams Creek Reservoir and Haviland Lake by the Colorado Division of Wildlife.
- **RIVER RAFTING** - Rivers on public lands are popular for white-water boating. Carry adequate safety equipment and comply with rafting regulations. Although there is no permit system on the Dolores River, there are rafting and camping restrictions along the Wilderness Study Area portion of the river. The BLM offers information on boating the Dolores River at: [www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/sjplc/recreation/sjdolores.html](http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/sjplc/recreation/sjdolores.html). Rafting and kayaking are also popular on the Upper Animas and Piedra rivers, which are very technical in nature, and caution is advised. Commercial outfitters offer guided trips under permit on all of these rivers.

## o **DISPERSED CAMPING**

Dispersed camping outside campgrounds is allowed in the backcountry, unless an area is posted as closed. In heavily used areas, dispersed sites are identified and have toilets or fire grates. To avoid damaging vegetation, camp in those areas which are already impacted. Do not try to level a site or dig

trenches (pick a level site with good drainage). You can drive up to 300 feet off any open road to access a campsite. You may not camp within 100 feet of any source of water, or camp for more than 14 days in the same spot.



## SEARCH & RESCUE CARDS

Backcountry travel calls for experience and preparation. Getting lost in a remote location can quickly turn into an emergency. Local sheriff's offices handle search-and-rescue operations. By purchasing a Colorado Outdoor Recreation Search & Rescue Card, the cost of a rescue would be covered. Those holding current Colorado hunting/fishing licenses or boat, snowmobile or ATV registrations are covered. Outdoor Recreation Search and Rescue cards are available from San Juan Public Lands offices, local retail vendors, or by phone or online from the State of Colorado. The cost is \$3 per year, or \$12 for five years, of coverage. For more information, go to: [www.colorado.gov](http://www.colorado.gov).



## GETTING ALONG WITH THE NEIGHBORS

Wild animals are the residents of this diverse terrain and vegetation. Campers are likely to see squirrels, chipmunks, marmots, deer, elk, skunks, porcupines, raccoons, and many of some 300 species of birds. Backcountry visitors may catch a glimpse of bighorn sheep, mountain goats, black bear, beaver, river otters or even mountain lions. View wildlife from a safe distance.

- **UNWANTED VISITORS** - Small mammals have an acute sense of smell. If lured into your campsite by the aroma of food or trash, they can cause a lot of damage. Some rodents have a taste for leather and anything sweaty or salty; store these items carefully. Never feed wild animals - it encourages them to become unafraid of humans, which is as dangerous to you as it is to them.
- **RATTLESNAKES** - Rattlesnakes are seldom seen at high elevations but may be found in lower areas. Their bites are serious, but less than 2% are fatal. Don't put your hands and feet in places without looking first. Snakes fill an important niche in the animal community, including eating rodents. If you see a snake, please treat it like any other forest animal — as a subject to observe but not disturb or injure.
- **DOGS AND WILDLIFE** - Dogs must be leashed inside campgrounds, and should be under voice control at your side in the backcountry. One of the most negative effects you can have on wildlife is to allow your dog to roam free. Dogs severely stress and endanger wild animals by chasing them. Even if the animal appears to have escaped unharmed, it may not survive as a result. In addition, wild creatures pose dangers to dogs - pets can be attacked by predators, or suffer when a skunk or porcupine must defend itself against curiosity or attack.
- **STORE FOOD PROPERLY: IT'S THE LAW** - Black bears can cause a lot of damage to your belongings, and, if a bear is desensitized to humans by your behavior, it may have to be destroyed. Bear-safety regulations are in effect for campgrounds and recreation areas. Food, containers or packaging, cooking utensils, garbage, and pet food or bird feeders must be stored in a bear-resistant manner, such as inside a hard-sided vehicle or camper; hung at least 10 feet above ground and 4 feet away from a tree or other support; inside an approved bear-resistant container; or within an electrified enclosure.



## MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

- **ROADS** - Most campgrounds are easy to reach by 2WD vehicles - some are accessed from paved highways, others by gravel roads. County roads accessing public lands may also carry a USFS/BLM road number. Beware of washboard surfaces on gravel roads, and watch for other visitors, wildlife, livestock and rockslides. Unless otherwise posted, the speed limit on USFS/BLM roads is 25 mph. USFS/BLM roads may be temporarily closed when wet, because of landslides, or during sensitive wildlife seasons. Motor vehicles must stay on open roads or trails designated for their use. In most areas, you may drive up to 300 feet off an open road to reach a dispersed campsite, but only if you can do so without causing damage to soils and vegetation.
- **OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLES** – Motorcycles and ATVs are allowed on designated roads and trails on USFS/BLM lands. Cross-country use of motorized vehicles is not allowed, and violators risk fines. Consult USFS/BLM maps for specific restrictions. Colorado residents and out-of-state visitors must obtain state registration to use an ATV, dirt bike, motorboat or snowmobile on public lands. Vehicles may be registered at many San Juan Public Lands offices and State Parks. Prices for registration vary. The owner must provide a VIN or serial number, make, model, engine size and previous registration number on ATVs, motorized dirt bikes, and snowmobiles. Boats must be registered by Colorado State Parks.
- **UNATTENDED VEHICLES** - Theft from vehicles is infrequent in campgrounds, but unfortunately common at some trailheads. If you leave your vehicle unattended, valuables should be locked out of sight or better yet, left at home.

## **SAFETY TIPS**

- **ALTITUDE** - Elevations range from 5,200 feet (BLM land near Cortez) to 14,246 feet (Mt. Wilson summit) above sea level. Altitude sickness is brought on by ascending to high elevations too rapidly. Symptoms include headache, loss of appetite, weakness or drowsiness. Victims should descend to lower elevations immediately.
- **WEATHER** - Weather can change rapidly. Summer temperatures can exceed 90 degrees (F), but cold weather may be encountered at any time. Beware of hypothermia brought on by low body temperature. Wear adequate clothing, stay dry and out of the wind. Carry raingear and wear fabrics that wick away sweat. Afternoon thunderstorms are common in summer and may include hail or snow. Seek shelter and stay away from high, exposed places or solitary trees. Lightning is common, so plan to end high-elevation hikes early in the day. Sun is intense at high elevations. Wear a wide-brimmed hat, sunscreen and sunglasses that filter ultraviolet rays.
- **WATER** - Intestinal infections from drinking untreated water is common. The primary culprit is a microorganism known as Giardia. Do not drink straight from streams, rivers or lakes. Drink only from safe sources, such as water taps in campgrounds. If you use water from natural sources, use chemical treatment or filtration. Untreated water must be brought to a sustained boil for 3–5 minutes to kill harmful organisms.
- **PESTS** - Mosquitoes, which can carry West Nile virus, are found in damp and forested locations. Avoid wet low-lying areas, take advantage of breezes and use insect repellent. Deer flies are prevalent on sunny summer days. Gnat season is heavy in lower elevation BLM lands in summer. Ticks can transmit Colorado tick fever - check for and remove ticks. Symptoms include fever, headache and body aches; sometimes drowsiness, nausea, abdominal pain, and a skin rash. Recovery can take weeks. If you feel ill, retain the tick for medical inspection. Treat clothing and exposed skin with insect repellent.

- **POISON IVY** - Leaves of three - let it be! Western poison ivy is a low, woody-stemmed plant with long-stalked leaves divided into three bright green, veined, rather large, waxy and coarse-toothed leaflets that turn red in fall. Poison ivy is found at lower elevations, in thickets along streams and on rocky hillsides. Washing with soap and water after exposure may help reduce the rash.

## **X HUNTING SEASON**

Colorado's wildlife is managed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife, which has jurisdiction over big-game hunting seasons on federal lands during late summer and fall. Hunting is not allowed within 150 feet of developed recreation areas, trails or roads. During hunting seasons, backcountry visitors should wear orange or brightly colored clothing, stay on well-used trails and give pack animals a wide berth on trails. For recorded information on hunting season dates and licenses, call 303-291-7529. In hunting season, some campgrounds stay open with limited services at discounted prices, while others remain open through fall with hosts and full services at full price. A good rule of thumb is, if the gate to a campground is open, the campground is open to use at some level. This situation is weather dependent and hard to predict in advance. For more information on which campgrounds may be open during hunting seasons, contact the San Juan Public Lands Office with jurisdiction, and obey campground entry signs.