

Williams Ranger District Dispersed Camping Guidelines

Kaibab National Forest

Updated June 30, 2011

What is Dispersed Camping?

Many people enjoy the solitude and primitive experience of camping away from developed campgrounds and other campers. Dispersed camping is the term used for camping anywhere in the National Forest outside of a developed campground. Dispersed camping is free and, therefore, there are no services such as trash removal and there are few, if any, facilities such as tables and fire pits.

There are extra responsibilities and skills that are necessary for dispersed camping. It is your responsibility to know these before you go camping. Camping rules and regulations are in place to make your experience a safe one and to protect natural and cultural resources so they remain unspoiled for other forest visitors.

What about Dispersed Camping with Motor Vehicles?

The Williams Ranger District is implementing Travel Management, which means that the rules applying to the use of motorized vehicles on the district have changed. Driving off of designated roads is no longer allowed except in very specific circumstances. Please refer to the free Williams Ranger District Motor Vehicle Use Map for details.

In the case of motorized vehicle use for the purpose of dispersed camping, motorists can drive up to 30 feet from the side of all open system roads, unless otherwise posted.

Rules for Dispersed Camping

- You may camp in a dispersed area for up to 14 days. You may not camp for longer than 14 days within any 30-day period on the Kaibab National Forest. Establishing residency on National Forest System Land is against federal regulation per Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 261.10 (b).
- If possible, use existing campsites to limit resource damage.
- You need to be self-contained. No amenities - such as water, trash cans, and restrooms - are provided.
- Camping is prohibited within 1 mile of a developed campground, administrative site or other developed recreation site such as Spring Valley Cabin.
- It is unlawful for a person to camp within one-fourth of a mile of a natural water hole containing water or a man-made watering facility containing water in such a place that wildlife or domestic stock will be denied access to the only reasonably available water.
- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, food and litter.

This information applies to the Williams Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest only.

- Follow Leave No Trace principles, www.lnt.org.
- Groups of more than 75 people wanting to use the forest need to obtain a special use permit. There is no fee, and permits can be obtained at the Williams Ranger District office.
- Always contact a local Forest Service office to see if any fire restrictions are in place.

Rules for Motorized Dispersed Camping

- In the case of motorized vehicle use for the purpose of dispersed camping, motorists can drive up to 30 feet from the side of all open system roads, unless otherwise posted.
- Visitors may disperse camp in the same areas they have in previous years. However, motorized vehicles may only be driven or parked up to 30 feet off of designated routes.
- Vehicles pulling trailers must park within the 30-foot-zone from the edge of designated routes. This means that parallel parking may be necessary in order to be compliant with Travel Management regulations.
- In many areas, short routes have been added to the designated road system to access recreation opportunities including motorized dispersed camping. These routes, which access historically-popular motorized dispersed camping sites, were added specifically to provide visitors a more enjoyable motorized dispersed camping experience. Use the free Williams Ranger District Motor Vehicle Use Map to locate these routes.

Can I Have a Campfire?

You should always contact a local Forest Service office to see if any fire restrictions are in place.

If campfires are allowed, please use existing fire rings to minimize the scarring of new rocks, soil and plants. If you don't bring your own firewood, collect only dead wood that is on the ground. You should not cut branches off of live trees. If a popular camping area does not have dead wood on the ground, please bring your own firewood. Wood permits are not needed to collect firewood for campfire use on the forest. If wood is transported home for personal use, a permit is required. To obtain a permit, please visit a local Forest Service office.

The Kaibab National Forest has wildfires each year. Many of these are caused by human activity, typically escaped campfires from dispersed campers. Campfires are allowed when you are dispersed camping unless there are fire restrictions in effect. It is your responsibility to know if fire restrictions are in effect before you go camping. You can learn about any fire restrictions by contacting a local Forest Service office.

Always practice fire safety. Make a fire only if you have a shovel and sufficient water to completely put it out. Never leave your campfire unattended. To make sure your campfire is out, drown with water, and stir with dirt, making sure all burned materials are extinguished and embers have cooled. Feel with your hand to make sure it is out cold.

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This is very important! Many forest fires are caused by abandoned campfires that were not completely out. Please only burn wood and paper products in campfires. Items such as aluminum cans, soup cans, glass bottles and plastics should be packed out when you leave.

Going to the Bathroom in the Woods

Dispersed camping means no bathrooms and no outhouses. Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished. Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products. For those with camp trailers, dispose of waste and grey water at dumping stations. Disposing of waste water or material on National Forest System Land is against federal regulation per Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 261.11 (d).

Treating Your Water

With increasing visitation to and use of Kaibab National Forest, some water sources have been contaminated with invisible micro-organisms that can make people very ill and even kill them in some cases.

The only way to ensure that water from any undeveloped source is safe is to treat it. Follow the water treatment guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. Water from faucets in developed recreation areas has been tested and treated and is safe to use without treating.

Have Fun!

If you follow these tips you can save a safe, low impact, primitive camping experience. Thank you for helping care for YOUR National Forest.