

VERMONT BACKCOUNTRY ETHICS

Developed In
Partnership With:



~ Leave Nothing But Tracks ~

1. PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

Practice Safety First. Be prepared; plan your trip, be self-reliant, have extra warm layers, carry first aid, emergency gear, headlamp, whistle, watch, lighter/matches, check the weather and snow conditions, have a turn-around time and stick to it. Know your equipment and its limits, have extra food and water, get training in wilderness first aid, safety and avalanche, NEVER fully depend on any electronic device, especially a cell phone. Plan for changes in weather. Have the gear to survive a night in the mountains.

Know where you are going. Have a map & compass and know how to use them, study the map in advance of your adventure, consider going with someone with experience in the area. Allow plenty of time for your adventure. Know emergency exit routes, and be sure to tell someone where you are going and then stay with that plan.

Know your own and your group's limits, and minimize risks. Always default to the weakest member's ability for maximum safety. Groups of three or more are encouraged (maximum of 10). Don't push yourself or others to take risks. Stay within your fitness and skill level. Stay together and use the buddy system. Check your watch and map regularly to keep track of your progress and location.

2. TRAVEL ON DURABLE SURFACES

Stay on deep snow cover whenever possible. Respect springtime trail closures. Stay on snow, rock, or walk in the middle of the trail if there is mud, to avoid creating new trails and damaging trailside plants. Ascend away from avalanche paths, cornices, steep slopes and unstable snow.

3. DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

Pack It In, Pack It Out. Pack out everything you bring with you. Burying trash and litter in the snow or ground is unacceptable. Pick up all food scraps, wax shavings, and pieces of litter. Pack out all trash: yours and others'. Bury human waste deep in snow at least 50' away from travel routes and at least 200 feet (70 adult steps) from water sources.

4. LEAVE THINGS AS THEY ARE

Leave only tracks. No unauthorized cutting. Leave all plants, rocks, animals, and historical or cultural artifacts as you find them. Take only pictures. Avoid introducing or transporting non-native or invasive species.

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**CATAMOUNT
TRAIL
ASSOCIATION**

www.catamounttrail.com

**VERMONT
BACKCOUNTRY
ALLIANCE**

www.vtbc.org



www.greenmountainclub.org



www.vtpr.org



www.fs.fed.us



www.winterwildlands.org



www.lnt.org

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5. MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE AND HUT IMPACTS

Use a **lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a lantern for light.** Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings. Keep fires small. Burn only downed wood. Never cut live plants. Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

Leave huts and cabins in **better shape than how you found them.** It is always best to cook outside whenever possible. Use extra care when cooking or heating inside huts. Be considerate of other users and observe any rules or instructions related to the shelter. Clean up before leaving. Don't leave food behind it only encourages the mice!

6. RESPECT WILDLIFE

Observe wildlife from a distance. **Do not follow or approach wildlife.** Winter is an especially vulnerable time for animals. Never feed wildlife or leave food behind to be eaten. Leave pets at home. Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.

7. BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS

Any maintenance or cutting can be done **only with permission, as part of an authorized project or program.** Respect landowners, both public and private. Ask permission before entering private land. On private land stay clear of homes, buildings, equipment and maple sap lines, etc... Respect all land postings. Thank Landowners if you see them.

Respect other skiers/riders and all other users. Keep noise to a minimum when near others, and let nature's sounds prevail. Promote friendly cooperative attitudes, share safety information, and help others if needed. Please keep your journey's end trailhead celebration activities respectful.

When ascending trails, keep clear and yield to downhill traffic. When descending always stay in control, go one at a time, and slow down near others. Avoid booting and snowshoeing in skin or ski tracks. Ski & ride conservatively to avoid accidents.

Respect designated areas, signs, and wildlife. Obey guidelines, stay out of sensitive natural areas, park ONLY in designated areas, do not block gates, roads or driveways, car pool if possible. Respect local hunting activity and events.

BE SAFE, HAVE FUN & THINK SNOW!

For more info please visit VTBC.ORG or CATAMOUNTTRAIL.ORG