

OUTDOOR NC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GETTING OUTSIDE DURING COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic has altered all our lives. Outdoor NC and The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics aligns with the CDC recommendations to help slow the spread of the virus so we can keep ourselves, our communities and our natural world healthy.

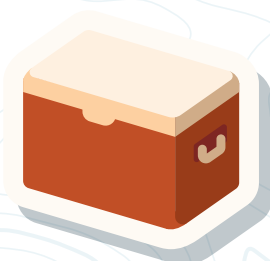
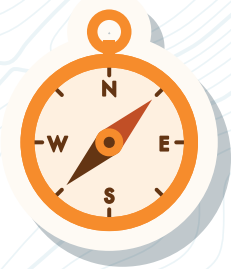


YOU AND YOUR OUTDOOR WORLD

You may be asking: can I go for a hike or walk on the beach right now? Your personal vulnerability, the health of others in your community, access to local and uncrowded spaces and more play into this decision. It may not be recommended to get out at all where COVID-19 is spiking, so pay close attention to guidance in your community before heading outside. Follow physical distancing guidelines and stay at least six feet away from anyone not living with you.

EXPECT CLOSURES OR LIMITED SERVICES

As parks, park agencies and businesses near these areas limit services or work remotely, closures and limited services are expected. The result could be a lack of water, restrooms, campgrounds, or other facilities being closed to the public. Take necessary precautions including bringing extra food, water and hand sanitizer, and by learning how to go to the bathroom outdoors (many experts recommend refraining from using public restrooms and other open facilities right now).



PACK OUT YOUR TRASH

With limited staff and services likely in many parks and protected areas, trash and recycling receptacles may not be emptied as often as normal (or at all). This can result in trash overflowing from receptacles which can not only tempt, but harm wildlife. You can help by packing your trash and recyclables - even crumbs, peels and cores - out with you in garbage bags and utilizing your own receptacles at home. If adventuring with your pet, plan to pack out its waste as well.

AVOID TIMES AND PLACES OF HIGH USE

Physical distancing applies in the outdoors just as it does anywhere else, so avoid crowded parks, trails and beaches whenever possible. Spread out to less popular spots and avoid times of highest use if possible, such as weekends and holidays. In addition, the CDC advises to "Wear a mask as feasible." This includes when you are hiking on trails that may be overcrowded, especially in times when social distancing is difficult. Follow group size guidelines at [usa.gov/state-health](https://www.usa.gov/state-health).

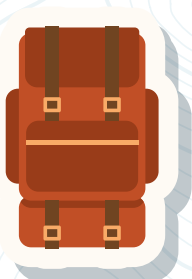
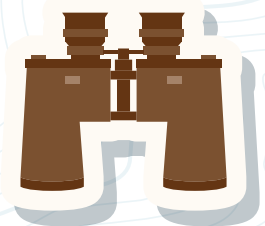


PROCEED WITH CAUTION

Keep in mind our health system may become more strained with COVID-19 patients. It's important to reduce potential accidents that would add to the stress on first responders and medical professionals. As much as possible, be prepared and learn about the area you plan to visit. If the area is closed or outside your typical comfort level, plan for a different activity. In fact, stick to activities and areas that are within your regular routine and take it easy.

DON'T FORGET THE OUTDOOR NC PRINCIPLES

We're in a pandemic, but that doesn't mean the Outdoor NC principles apply any less. In fact, since our outdoor spaces will likely be receiving less attention from staff/volunteers while having higher-than-usual visitation, our shared spaces need us to be stewards more than ever. Please prepare for all weather conditions, stick to trails, dispose of waste properly, minimize fire impacts, leave what you find, keep a safe distance from wildlife, and do your best to eliminate impacts.



BE CONSIDERATE AND KIND TO OTHER VISITORS

We are all in this together. Be considerate of others by ensuring you practice physical distancing. If you are passing another group and cannot maintain physical distance, put on your mask or turn your face away to minimize exposure. Be particularly kind to park staff during these challenging times. Help them do their job by doing your part to take care of each other and our beloved outdoors. That way we can all enjoy North Carolina's natural wonders for years to come.