

# ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CAMPING



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

## Tips for packing and camping sustainably at DEC campgrounds

Camping is a great way to enjoy New York's beautiful natural resources. When you camp, it's important to be a good steward in protecting our lands, air and waters. Follow these guidelines to become a more sustainable camper at DEC campgrounds and help protect our environment, natural resources, and wildlife.

### How to pack with the environment in mind

The camping supplies you use can make a difference. If you pack sustainably, you will camp sustainably. DEC recommends the following tips and tricks to help start your trip off the right way. These guidelines are appropriate for any camping trip, whether it's at a state campground, private facility or even a primitive island.

#### Packaging

- Bring reusable containers for storing leftovers to ensure no food goes to waste.
- Prior to your trip, re-pack any food you are bringing along in reusable containers. For example, packing eggs in a durable, reusable carton will not only cut down on packaging waste you'll have to dispose of at the campground; but also ensure your food is protected in the cooler.
  - Going on a 2-3-day camping trip and looking forward to an egg breakfast? Crack eggs into a mason jar for easy packing (plastic is preferable since it won't break). A dozen eggs fit perfectly into a 1-quart jar and take up minimal cooler space.
  - Repackage uncooked meats you bring along into sealable food storage containers that won't leak.
  - If you plan on bringing pasta salad on your trip, make it ahead of time and store it in a gallon zip lock bag at the top of your cooler. Since pasta lies flat in the bag, it won't take up much room, saving valuable cooler space.

#### Dishes/Cooking

- Reusable cooking utensils and reusable or recyclable dishes cut down on the amount of trash generated.
- Reusable mugs, cups, or bottles that can easily be rinsed or washed cut down on plastic waste. If it's necessary to use plastic, remember to recycle those items.
- Consider using biodegradable/earth-friendly dish soap, sponges, and water basins. Do your dishes at least 150 feet away from any body of water. Disposing of grey water on the ground or in waterbodies is prohibited at state campgrounds; Make sure you contain grey water from dishwashing and other such activities and properly dispose it in sink drains or dumping stations connected to water treatment facilities.

#### Miscellaneous

- Use separate clear trash bags for trash and recyclables – it allows easy sorting at campground recycling facilities.
- Pack food and supplies in totes or heavy-duty reusable grocery bags instead of plastic bags. This will help you stay organized and will cut down on plastic waste.

- Bring non-toxic sunscreen and bug spray that won't harm waters, plants, and wildlife. This will also ensure you avoid inhaling harsh chemicals.
  - Natural Bug Spray Recipe: To a 4-oz. spray bottle add...
    - 2 oz. of witch hazel (This doesn't need to be exact. Just eyeball it by filling the bottle a little less than half full.)
    - 2 oz. of distilled water (Fill the remainder of the bottle until it's almost full, but leave room for adding essential oils and the spray top.)
    - Essential oil (20-25 drops for children age 3+ or 40-50 drops for adults and children age 10+)
      - Essential oils that are traditionally recommended for their bug repellent properties: Citronella, Lemongrass, Rosemary, Geranium, Spearmint, Thyme, and Clove.
- Bring earth-friendly toilet paper when camping on state islands.

## How to be an environmentally friendly camper

- Get your firewood locally.
  - Locally sourced firewood is firewood from within a 50-mile radius of your desired campground. Under State regulation, it is illegal to transport untreated firewood more than 50 miles from its source within New York since it could spread diseases and invasive species that can quickly kill trees.
    - Firewood Restriction Maps: [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/63460](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/63460)
- When camping at a state island campground, always use a water filtration system when gathering drinking water from any body of water.
  - Use reusable drinking bottles to cut down on the amount of individual plastic bottle waste.
- Water spigots are provided throughout state campgrounds, excluding island camping, for easy refilling of reusable water jugs and bottles. This reduces individual plastic bottle use.
- Limit lantern, flashlight, and headlamp use when possible. Use only when necessary – it will help reduce light pollution for fellow campers and to create a more natural, enjoyable experience.
- Keep your trash and recycling separate, starting at the beginning of your trip. This will ensure easy management of these items at the campground's recycling center
  - Throw away all food scraps in trash bags. Leaving food scraps on the ground attracts nuisance wildlife to your site, as well as disrupts the eating patterns of some wildlife species.
- It may seem convenient to throw packaging and wrappers into the fire, but DON'T. Please dispose of all trash in trash bags and recycle packaging to avoid polluting the air.
  - This will also protect you and your loved ones from breathing in toxic smoke.
- Respect your natural surroundings and wildlife.
  - Do not cut down vegetation on your campsite or anyplace in the campground.
  - Do not feed wildlife. Leave them be and enjoy them from a distance.
- Packing up? Walk your campsite before pulling away to ensure all trash is removed from the site.



### CONTACT INFORMATION

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