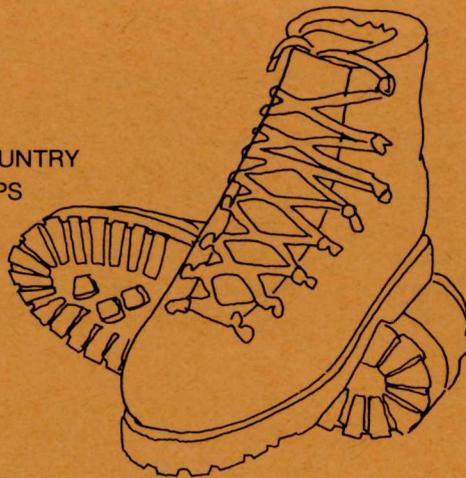




BACKCOUNTRY TRAIL TIPS



- Stay on blazed trails unless you're proficient with your topographical map and compass.
 - Team up with one or more companions for safety and comradeship.
 - Children — if you have them along, be sure they have identification on them at all times; tell them what to do if they get lost ("stay where you are"); and give them a whistle to signal for help.
 - Each member of a hiking party should know the day's route in case individuals become separated.
 - Sign up at trail registers. It's a good safety measure and your information may help park managers learn more about backcountry use.
 - Beware when crossing streams. Any white water, water-polished rocks, or areas above waterfalls can be particularly treacherous.
 - In a lightning storm, move downhill below a ridge or a peak. Avoid exposed solitary objects such as large rocks or trees. Find shelter in lower areas, in a dense stand of trees, or under overhanging rocks.
-
- Limit the weight of your pack to one-fifth your own weight — until you prove you can carry more.
 - If your shoes are new, be sure they've been broken in before you start.
 - Never take short cuts across switchbacks in the trail. It can be hazardous for you, can damage the vegetation, and will cause soil erosion.
 - Winter hikers, riders and cross-country skiers are welcome, but should come prepared for severe weather.

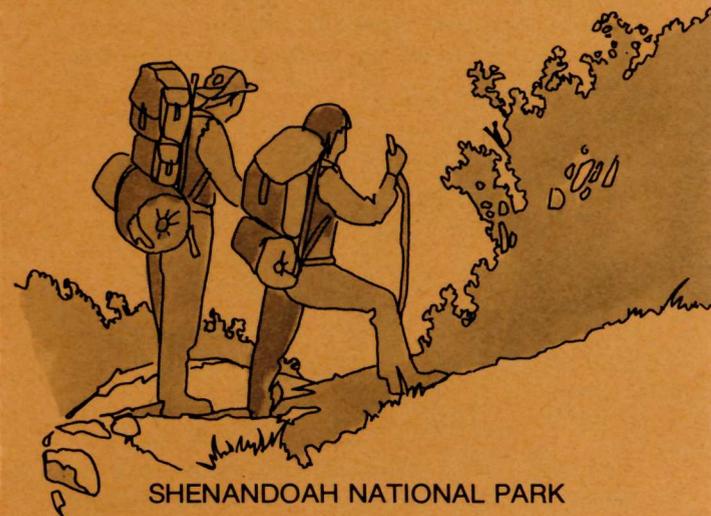


LAST WORD

Shenandoah's wilderness areas have been set aside as an outdoor museum of natural history. Man, as the intruder, should neither harm nor disturb the natural environment. By preparing for your backcountry visit and by exercising "good mountain manners," you will reserve the wilderness for those who come down the trail after you.

**National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior**

Exploring the Backcountry



SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

Waterfalls leap over ledges of ancient lava. Trails lead deep into the forest. A white-tailed deer browses, alert to an intruder's footstep. Glades bloom with wildflowers.

Scenes like these draw wilderness seekers to Shenandoah National Park. Here, high in the Blue Ridge Mountains, backpackers leave their cars, shoulder a pack frame and head into the backcountry. Fishermen test a new lure in one of the park's 40 trout streams. Horseback riders and cross-country skiers follow old roads. The wilderness tests their stamina and allows them to enjoy the isolation and to experience nature on its own terms.

The new popularity of backcountry hiking, horseback riding, and camping poses a challenge to the park manager. How can he permit the maximum number of visitors to use this fragile backcountry with a minimum effect on these primitive areas?

Yesteryear, when moccasined Indians trod Shenandoah's trails, overuse was no problem. Today, when thousands of hikers, fishermen, riders and campers seek a wilderness experience, it is a different matter.

The answer is "good mountain manners." Careful use will leave the backcountry undisturbed for the visitor coming later. Your backcountry permit allows you to explore the park's wilderness areas and more than 400 miles of trails. But, with this freedom to explore goes a responsibility to protect.

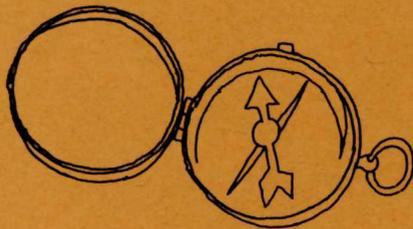
In this folder you will find suggestions about how to plan in advance for a backcountry adventure at Shenandoah; what to do when you reach the park; trail hints to help you on your way; and a summary of the park's rules governing hiking, camping, horseback riding, fishing, and skiing in the backcountry.

THINK AHEAD

When you explore the backcountry, you have to live out of your knapsack. And you face what seems a contradiction: you must take everything you need for the trip; yet travel light. Result: you get down to life's basic necessities in a hurry.

With such choices to make, you'll find it is important to plan your wilderness journey ahead of time. Here are ten things to consider:

Maps and guides — The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club publishes topographic maps of the park (north, central, and southern sections). The maps portray in detail streams, elevations, trails, shelters, and facilities. Write to the park for a price list of maps, trail guides, and handbooks to prepare yourself for a meaningful visit.



Compass — A good azimuth compass teams up well with a topographic map to give you the land navigation tools you need.

Backpack — Join in the lively discussions all backpackers enjoy about what makes the lightest, best balanced, most easily carried packboard, knapsack and frame, or rucksack — then make your own choice.

Clothing — Choose clothing that suits Shenandoah's changeable, cool, sometimes wet weather. Bring layers of clothes that can be peeled off. A rain poncho also makes a good ground cloth.

Sleeping bag — Select a warm one for cold nights yet lightweight for carrying.

Tent — Synthetic fabrics have made possible a variety of lightweight trail tents, although some hikers get along well with a tarpaulin as a simple shelter. A hammock can serve instead of a tent.

Food — Freeze-dried and dehydrated foods are light to carry and have revolutionized menus in the backcountry. No more hardtack and raisins; now you can turn out miracle meals fit for a king of the trail. From April to October, camping supplies are available at various locations in the park.

Tools of the trade — Items like a backpacker stove, matches, rope, camp knife, flashlight, canteen, and collapsible water container quickly come to mind. Your list will expand to include other necessities, then shrink to exclude luxuries.

First aid — You will want to take along a standard kit for possible on-the-trail treatment.

Emergency equipment — Depending on how deep into the wilderness you plan to go, you may carry along a mirror, a whistle, or other emergency signaling items. In the winter, take additional clothing and rations.

Before you depart, it is a good idea to leave a copy of your planned itinerary, routes and time of return with your family or a close friend.

WHEN YOU REACH THE PARK

Pick up your free backcountry permit (during daylight hours only) at a ranger station, at one of the two park visitor centers, or at park headquarters. Ranger stations are located at Front Royal at the northern end of the park; Matthews Arm, Thornton Gap and Big Meadows; and at Simmons Gap and Rockfish Gap in the southern part of the park. Park headquarters is four miles west of Thornton Gap on U.S. Highway 211.



If you wish, you may get your backcountry permit ahead of time. Drop a brief letter to the Superintendent, Shenandoah National Park, Luray, VA 22835 (Attn: Backcountry Permit). Tell him the dates you will be in the park, the number in your party, the location and dates of each overnight camp, and of course your name and address.

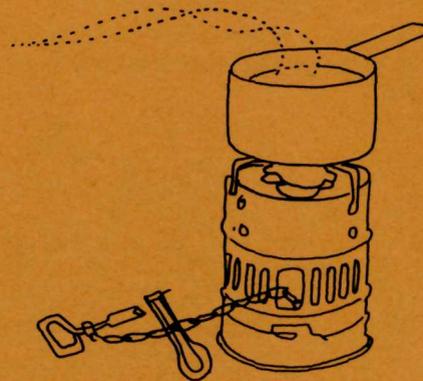
Issuing backcountry permits allows the park staff to monitor and regulate the number of users in wilderness areas. Permits are an important management tool in the park's plan of dispersed backcountry use.

At several ranger stations, wilderness hikers may view a five-minute slide talk "Backpacking in Shenandoah — What You'll Need to Know." A ranger will be on duty to answer questions concerning trail conditions, weather forecasts, and interesting spots and hazards along the route.

You might also pick up a park minifolder that gives an overall map of the park, as well as another pocket-sized folder titled "Bear — Friend or Foe?"

If you're going to fish, you may purchase a five-day Virginia license at a park concession facility. Fishing season runs from early April to mid-October.

With your permit, you and your party (maximum of 10 persons) may camp at nearly any isolated location you choose.



BACKCOUNTRY RULES

Now that you are fully equipped and well prepared, the backcountry is open to you — about 150,000 acres within the park. Here are the common sense rules governing camping in the backcountry of Shenandoah National Park that the rangers will enforce:

- Permits are required and must be obtained before entering the backcountry.
- Backcountry camping is literally "out of sight!" Pitch your camp at least 250 yards away from any paved road and half a mile from any developed park area. Fade into the wilderness by camping out of sight of any hiking trail, out of sight of any other camping party, and at least 25 yards from any stream.

- Do not plan to bed down in one of the trail shelters. They are for emergency use only — for first aid or protection in a severe storm. You're prepared to camp in the open — do your thing.

- Wood or charcoal fires are not permitted in the Shenandoah backcountry. Improper wood gathering, fire-blackened rocks and sterilized soil produce long-lasting damage to the environment. Instead, bring along one of the efficient and compact backpacker stoves.

- Do not trench your tent or level off your tent site. Erase all evidence of your campsite when you leave. Treat the natural surroundings as gently as you can.

- Two days is the maximum stay at a backcountry campsite. Move along — so the vegetation can restore itself.

- Bearproof your campsite. Hang your food at a distance from your campsite and at least 10 feet above the ground. Choose a limb that cannot support a bear's weight; rig your food above the ground between two trees.

- Lighten your pack by leaving glass containers at home — they are prohibited in the backcountry.

- Horses must be tied near the trailside on a short tether. Free grazing is not permitted. Carry pellet feed for your horse.

- Riders must keep their mounts off foottrails and away from campgrounds and developed areas.

- Pets are best left at home; any pets within the park must be on a short leash, not allowed to run freely.

Violation of backcountry regulations can bring a minimum fine of \$25. If you have questions, ask a ranger before you start.



BACKCOUNTRY SANITATION

- Carry out all used cans, aluminum foil and disposables (empty cans are easier to carry if you flatten them). Burying such trash is not satisfactory because it does not decompose and eventually comes to the surface through animal or frost action.

- Place all other refuse in plastic bags and pack it out; don't litter the landscape.

- To insure safe drinking water, dissolve a halozone or iodine tablet in a container of stream or spring water, or boil the water for ten minutes.

- After washing dishes or bathing, discard the water and detergent at least 30 feet away from any stream or spring. In this way, the earth will strain out the chemicals and prevent stream pollution.

- Experienced campers usually carry a small digging tool. To dispose of human waste, select a screened spot at least 30 feet from any trail or water source. Dig a hole five inches deep and ten inches across. Try to remove the sod in one piece. After use, cover the site with the loose soil, then add the sod.