

Make It Your Nature to Protect North Carolina's COASTAL OUTDOOR SPACES

The North Carolina outdoors is really a reflection of you. That's why Outdoor NC and Leave No Trace have partnered together to make it easy for you to help preserve the natural beauty of our state.



PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

- Be attentive to weather conditions. Weather at the coast can change rapidly. Summer storms roll in quickly—if you see dark clouds, assume there is lightning and leave the water.
- Know the tide schedules, check the rip current reports and learn to identify them, be mindful of shorebreak, and watch for flags at the beach signifying water conditions.
- Red flags mean no swimming.
- Always swim near a lifeguard. Pack food, water and the right clothes to protect you from the elements.
- Remember to park only in designated parking areas. If that area is full, drive to another one.

STICK TO TRAILS AND OVERNIGHT RIGHT

- Stick to designated trails to and from the beach or water, and durable surfaces on the beach such as sand, gravel and bare rock. Coastal grasses are fragile and can easily be impacted by visitors traveling across them.
- In coastal ecosystems, there can be entire marine microbiomes beneath your feet! Avoid rocks covered in barnacles, seaweed and other sensitive areas as much as possible.
- Camp only in designated areas.

TRASH YOUR TRASH

- Trash can appear in many ways. We know that it gets washed up by the tides from the ocean/ rivers/sounds. We can all do our part by picking up our trash and food scraps and taking them with us, but also consider taking an extra bag with you to pick up anything that you find along the way. It will make it better for everyone, including the animals that often ingest trash after mistaking it for food which can cause harm to wildlife.
- Don't forget to pack out your pet's waste, as it contains harmful bacteria that can get into water sources and cause other animals or even humans to be sick.
- Pack it in and pack it out. Take your umbrellas, tents, chairs and other personal items off the beach at night.
- Many beaches require that all chairs and umbrellas be removed daily for the safety of wildlife and so they don't wash into the ocean. Familiarize yourself with the local regulations.

LEAVE IT AS YOU FIND IT

- Our rivers/sounds and ocean are home to many sensitive habitats for wildlife and plants—some endangered. Instead of gathering plants, moving rocks, taking shells and sand dollars, take a picture to share and to hold on to that memory.
- Leave rocks and shells as you find them to protect critters' sensitive habitats, prevent erosion and avoid other ecological impacts.
- Fill in sand holes, keep flashlights and outdoor house lights off so they are not a hazard to nesting sea turtles.

BE CAREFUL WITH FIRE

- If you choose to have a fire at the beach, check on regulations, secure a permit if needed, dig a 3' x 3' x 2' hole and keep the fire small. If allowed, gather wood from the ground instead of breaking branches from trees. Buy firewood locally to avoid bringing in invasive species.
- Burn all wood to ash. Before leaving, check that the fire is completely out, ashes are cold and holes are filled in.

KEEP WILDLIFE WILD

- The NC Coast is full of wildlife from black bears and wild mustang horses, to many different species of birds and marine life. All wildlife should be treated with respect in the natural areas you are visiting.
- Observe creatures from a distance. Getting too close causes undue stress and harm.
- Never feed wild animals, including sea gulls. It alters their natural behavior and puts them and you at risk. When in bear country, always be sure to properly store food, trash and any "smellables", such as lip balms and deodorant, to prevent any unwanted encounters.
- When fishing remember to clean up all lines, hooks and bait so the wildlife doesn't get hurt or tangled in it.

Be Considerate of Others and Share the Outdoors

- People have a range of skill levels and different ideas about how to enjoy the outdoors. Respect others so that North Carolina's natural spaces will be welcoming and relaxing for all.
- Be mindful of your noise level so that others can listen to nature. Remember sound travels better over water, and winds can carry your sounds in other directions.

