

# Leave No Trace: Applied to Canyoning

You have probably seen this sign a few times already. These are the 7 'Leave No Trace' principles as they apply to the sport of canyoning:

Preparing for your canyoning trip is crucial:

- Finding beta/topos
- Ensure canyon access is permitted
- Ensure that the canyon grade matches your skill level
- Check the actual conditions inside the canyon
- Check the weather forecast
- Get the right equipment and pack it well
- The size of your group matters!

We follow trails inside canyons but we can't always see them as we go from hard rock to hard rock. Walk in line following your leader.

Take a bathroom break before going in, and bring a pack it out bathroom kit.

**THE LEAVE NO TRACE SEVEN PRINCIPLES**

- 1 PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE**  
Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit. Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies. Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use. Visit in small groups when possible. Consider splitting larger groups into smaller groups. Repackage food to minimize waste. Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.
- 2 TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES**  
Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow. Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams. Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary. In popular areas: Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites. Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy. Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent. In pristine areas: Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails. Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.
- 3 DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY**  
Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food and litter. Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep, at least 200 feet from water, camp and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished. Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products. To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.
- 4 LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND**  
Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch cultural or historic structures and artifacts. Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them. Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species. Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.
- 5 MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS**  
Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light. Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires. Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand. Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.
- 6 RESPECT WILDLIFE**  
Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them. Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers. Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely. Control pets at all times, or leave them at home. Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.
- 7 BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS**  
Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience. Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail. Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock. Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors. Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

Infographic by Earth River SUP, a proud partner of the Leave No Trace Center For Outdoor Ethics  
Leave No Trace Seven Principles © 1999 by the Leave No Trace Center For Outdoor Ethics; www.LNT.org

NO CAIRNS or other trail markers leading to the canyon. Don't bring people who don't have the right skills to access these places.

Only build a fire in the event of an emergency.

Learn about the species present in the environment, and do not interfere with them.

Hikers, climbers, etc. We all love visiting waterfalls and steep carved canyon walls. Let other people quietly enjoy these places.



# Leave No Trace: Canyoning Specifics

Here are a few more tips to help us protect these wild places:



## Know where to step



Step on hard/durable surfaces and avoid:

- Moss and other plants
- Gravel and sand in stream beds and river banks. These places are home to insects, larvae and fish eggs which are all essential to the ecosystem.

Our playground was created through erosion over millions of years, so we have a lot of solid rock to walk on! Only a few areas need to be avoided, so take the time to look down and swim where possible.



## Learn about the endangered species in your own area



Many different animals, insects, and plants live in and around canyons.

Water travels much further than we do, and contamination can spread rapidly over long distances.

By learning about endangered species we can know more about the protocols in place to protect them and avoid disturbing them.



# Precautions for Canyoning in the Rockies

Here are a few critical points to be aware of when canyoning in the Rockies:



## Black Swifts

We know very little about this bird species but that they are sometimes found nesting in canyons. Keeping noise to a minimum during nesting season and following the route beta will help to not disturb them.

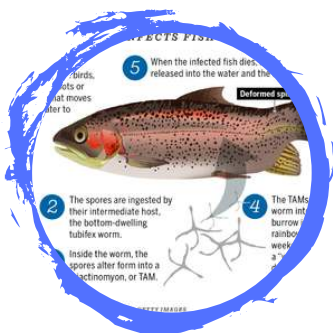
Remember, anchors are often placed to specifically avoid disturbing nesting birds. Please respect this!



## White Bark Pine

These are not found within the canyons, but on the access trails and the edges of the canyon walls.

Don't use them as anchors or cut their branches.



## Whirling disease & invasive species

There are only a few species of fish native to the water in our canyons. BUT, the water we travel in feeds other rivers and lakes. Wash your gear after every canyon or river/lake activity, and learn how to do it thoroughly.

Fill out a 'clean, drain, dry' self-certification document visiting Canyons located in the National Parks. This document can be found on the Parks Canada website: <https://parks.canada.ca/>



# Precautions for Canyoning in BC

Here are a few critical points to be aware of when canyoning in BC:



## Black Swifts

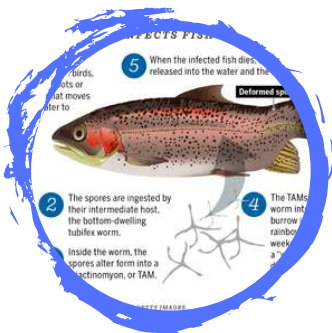
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## Salmon run

Many canyons in BC end where Salmon and other Salmonidae are spawning. Know the timelines, and make the effort to not step in creek beds at the end of the canyon section. It is usually wide enough there to exit without impacting the fish populations.



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# WCA Sustainability Act

As guides we not only care about the environment, but we act as guardians of the canyons' ecosystems.

## General information

- Use of Greengeek as our server for both websites (150% of the energy used is produced by solar panels)
- Conscious use of paper, electricity, and water at the office
- Pushing to reduce the use of brochures for advertising and using QR codes and efficient communication tools instead
- Use of biodegradable shampoo for wetsuits
- Following strict rules set up by National Parks for gear decontamination to avoid the spread of whirling diseases and other invasive species even when not operating in parks
- Our gear storage is powered by solar panels
- Use of reusable ziplock-wrapped waxed fabric, and water bottles for our lunch
- New in 2023: we are trying to repurpose our old ropes

## Guiding Philosophy

- Our guides hold international certifications, but also participate in serious in-house training because safe conduct means less impact.
- We choose to use quality gear that can be repaired instead of cheap replaceable gear
- We are conscious about choosing guides who care about environmental preservation.
- Guides work together to remove trash and gear left by other parties (leftover ice climbing anchors, illegal dumping, etc). Check our Instagram - you won't believe it!
- Educating our clients (interpretive) and also any other people we encounter during our tours.
- We use strict "trails" in the canyons we guide to avoid any disturbance.
- Small-setting groups tours.
- Notifying authorities about environmental abuse. We have already reported an illegal fire, and poaching of a bear cub that we discovered around one of our canyons.

## Education is key!

We educate the public on how to protect these places during our tours and courses, through our website and social media, and through our recreational practice and engagement in canyoning associations. We believe that giving people access to beautiful canyons with sufficient education will help to raise public awareness on how to care for the specific canyon environment. When we appreciate our wild spaces, we strive harder to protect them!

