



Backcountry Use



General Information

Great Basin National Park offers extensive areas for backpacking trips. Though there are a number of established routes, much of the park, especially the fragile alpine areas, remains wild country without trails. Backpackers should be prepared to hike cross-country on hard-to-follow routes, or to follow drainages, ridges and other natural features.

Skills in map reading are essential to any off-trail travel in the park. Though permits are currently not required for backcountry camping, we encourage you to come to the visitor center before departing to fill out a voluntary backcountry registration form and to obtain the latest information on backcountry conditions.

Access

Much of the park's scenic backcountry is at elevations of 9000 feet and above. As a result the hiking season here is typically limited to the months of June through September. Deep snow closes the roads and limits access to those equipped with skis or snowshoes for the remainder of the year. The Wheeler Peak Scenic Drive, one of the roads which provides access to the high country, is often not completely open until mid-June, though it may be

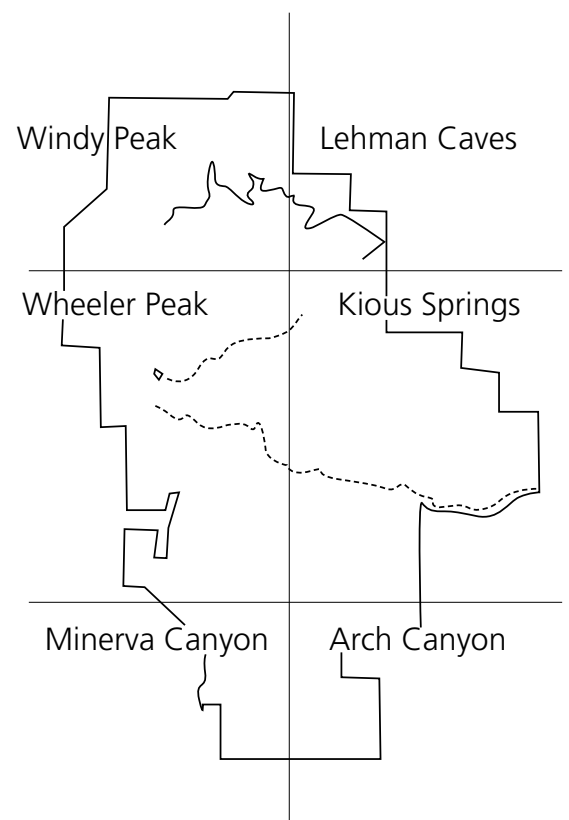
open by Memorial Day Weekend. The upper elevations of the dirt roads that lead into the remote southern section of the park are impassable until late spring. Four-wheel drive is required on some of these roads, especially when wet. Inquire at the Visitor Center for more information on dirt roads which provide access to the backcountry.

Topographic Maps

Great Basin National Park is covered by six topographic sheets in the United States 7 1/2 minute series. The Wheeler Peak and Kious Spring sheets cover much of the high-elevation, scenic backcountry. The Windy Peak sheet covers a number of the most popular trails; however, these trails are also the most heavily used by day hikers. The Lehman Caves sheet covers mostly low-elevation areas outside the park. The most remote, least-used backcountry areas are covered by the Minerva Canyon and Arch Canyon sheets.

"Hiking Map and Guide, Great Basin National Park" is a single-sheet covering all six topographic maps at a scale of 1:48,000. The map is published by Earthwalk Press and is available in regular and waterproof versions.

These maps are sold at the visitor center information desk. Maps can also be ordered by mail from the Great Basin Association, Baker, NV 89311.



Guidelines for Backcountry Use

- 1) **Trails** - If trails are provided, stay on them. Taking shortcuts creates a complex web of trails and causes erosion. When hiking trailless areas try to disperse use by not following other's footsteps.
- 2) **Fires** - Fires may not be built in the high country above 10,000 feet elevation. At lower elevations collect only dead wood already on the ground. Do not collect bristlecone pine wood, even when dead or down. (The wood records in its growth rings a history of climatic change valuable to scientists.) It is illegal to leave any fire untended. The park strongly recommends using stoves for cooking in the backcountry.
- 3) **Camping** - Backcountry camping is not permitted within 1/4 mile from any developed site (i.e. road, building, campground, etc.), within the Wheeler Peak or Lexington Arch day use areas, or in bristlecone pine groves. Campsites must be a minimum of 100 feet away from trails and water. Camp on mineral soil if possible, and avoid camping in the treeless alpine zone.
- 4) **Human waste disposal** - Pick a site at least 200 ft. (60 m) from water, trails and campsites. Bury waste in a hole 4 - 8 inches deep. All toilet paper should be packed out with you.
- 5) **Firearms** - Firearms are not allowed in the park.
- 6) **Fishing** - Fishing is allowed with a Nevada state fishing license. Use of live bait is prohibited. Fish entrails should be buried.
- 7) **Horses** - Llamas, horses, and mules are allowed in the backcountry as pack animals. Scatter manure piles at trailheads and at backcountry campsites. Do not tie animals to vegetation. Use a picket or a nightline.
- 8) **Pets** - Pets are not allowed in the backcountry.
- 9) **Bicycles** - Bicycles are prohibited on trails and in the backcountry. Bicycles are restricted to park roads

Warnings and Hazards

Hypothermia, dehydration, altitude sickness and sun exposure are serious hazards whether you are going out for several days or just for a couple hours. Always bring extra clothing and plenty of food and water. More information about these hazards can be obtained at the visitor center. Also remember that it is unsafe to enter any mine or cave without proper approval.

Weather

Elevations in the park range from 6,200 to 13,063 feet, producing highly variable weather conditions. While it is often warm and pleasant at lower elevations, snow and electrical storms can occur at higher elevations any month of the year. These conditions can be life threatening, so hikers heading into the backcountry must be prepared for these conditions.

Water

Water supplies in the backcountry are highly variable from year to year and season to season. Ask at the Visitor Center about water sources and availability when you arrive. Generally, late spring is the time of most abundant water. By late summer, streams and springs can be dry. Carry ample water on any backcountry trip, *and drink it!* Keeping hydrated prevents many ailments encountered while hiking. **All water should be boiled or filtered before drinking!**

Leave No Trace



Leave No Trace is a national program to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research, and partnerships. Following the six principles of Leave No Trace helps to both make your trip into the backcountry a safe trip with minimal impact on the resource.

For more information on the Leave No Trace program and Leave No Trace workshops, visit their web site at www.lnt.org, call (800) 332-4100, or write to P.O. Box 997, Boulder, CO 80306.

The six principles of Leave No Trace are:

1. **Plan Ahead and Prepare**
2. **Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces**
3. **Dispose of Waste Properly**
4. **Leave What You Find**
5. **Minimize Campfire Impacts**
6. **Respect Wildlife**