

Chapter Four: Personal Hygiene

Grand Canyon National Park and Round House Productions: <http://www.rhpmedia.com/>

A trip down the river lasts days for some, weeks for others but the last thing anyone wants is to get sick on the river or become very unpopular by spreading an illness.

One of the most effective and easiest ways of preventing an illness from ruining a trip is for all members of the group to wash their hands often.

Anytime you set up a table, wash your hands with soap and water.

Anytime you prepare a meal, wash your hands.

Anytime you eat a meal wash your hands.

After setup/breakdown or use of the toilet wash your hands.

You may have guessed by now it is really important to wash your hands.

You are conveniently located next to a giant hand washing system. Always have soap handy both in the kitchen and at the toilet facilities. Hand washing should be done with treated water. So if you wash your hands with untreated river water you should then use hand sanitizer afterwards.

The river water running next to camp will be useful for all sorts of activities.

One the most important of these will happen when you get the call of nature. Peeing in the river is essential for a healthy beach. The Grand Canyon desert ecosystem gets little rain and has limited amounts of organic material in the soil to process your urine. The river on the other hand does an excellent job of diluting and processing it. Plus the view is terrific.

At night, peeing in the river can be dangerous, so always wear a headlamp, and consider using a “pee-bucket”.

While the river will process the pee well, the wet sands in the tide area will not. A consequence of not “hitting the water” is an ugly green algae that grows on the beaches.

When going hiking plan ahead. Do you have to go before leaving camp and the river?

You should not pee in a creek or drainage. Since most of the hikes are in drainages, your opportunity to pee off river will be limited. If you didn't plan ahead you need to get 100 feet from the drainage which unfortunately may prove impossible in a narrow slot canyon.

If you have to defecate while away from the river and your toilet system you need to bury the waste at least six inches deep and at least one hundred feet from any water source or trail, and carry the used toilet paper back to your toilet.