



Wilderness Camping



Wilderness camping at Lava Beds

There are more than 28,000 acres of designated Wilderness for you to explore in the Lava Beds. Wilderness camping is available in these areas, but please be advised of regulations and take proper precautions to ensure you have an enjoyable experience. Maps can be found at the visitor center and on bulletin boards to show you wilderness locations within the Monument.

Wilderness Regulations



- Pets, hunting, bicycles, and motorized vehicles are not allowed.
- No groups of more than **12 individuals** are permitted. It is recommended to break down into smaller groups of 4-6 individuals.
- No camping in or within **100 yards** (92m) of caves.
- No camping within **0.25 miles** (.04 km) of roads, trailheads, and parking areas.
- No open fires. Gas stoves are permitted.
- Cultural resources, such as rusty cans, stacked rocks and obsidian flakes should **not be disturbed**. Rock stack construction is discouraged.
- Entrance in wilderness caves is permitted unless specifically marked as closed. Enter them at your own risk and have the required skills and equipment to explore safely.
- If you pack it in, pack it back out (remove all trash).

Camping Etiquette

- **Hiking** –Stay on the trail, do not create social trails. If you are hiking cross-country (off-trail) do not hike single-file, and resist widening existing trail.
- **Campsite** –Use already existing campsites when available. Do not leave evidence of fire rings, tent sites, trash, or graffiti when leaving an area.
- **Food Protection System**–No permanent food protection systems are provided or permitted. Portable systems are permitted, but must be removed at the trip end.
- **Trash Disposal** –Pack out garbage and leftover food; never bury it. Leave the area cleaner than you found it.
- **Waste Disposal** –For solid human waste, “cat holes” should be dug 2” deep at minimum and 200 feet away from caves, campsites, and trails. If cat holes are not feasible, cover waste with a rock. Better yet, pack it out.
- **Wildlife** –Feeding wildlife and/or encouraging human contact with wildlife is **not** allowed.

Horse Regulations

- Horses and pack animals are only permitted on Three Sisters, Lyons, and Whitney Butte Trails.
- Leg protectors are recommended for horses and riders.
- All wilderness regulations apply to both horse and rider.
- Carry plenty of water. Summer days are hot and there is **no** surface water.

Things to Remember

- **Water** – There are no springs, streams, or lakes within the Monument, so carry plenty.
- **Preparation & Planning** – Know regulations and special concerns. Be prepared for all weather conditions and scenarios.
- **Safety** – Carry first aid supplies. Let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return. Proper hiking gear is recommended while in rough terrain to ensure safety.
- **Terrain** – Lava rock is very rough, therefore off-trail hiking on lava flows and formations is not recommended.
- **Sun Protection** – Sunscreen and hats are advised year-round.
- **Fire** – No open fires. Gas stoves are permitted.
- **Weather** – Daily and weekly weather forecasts are posted at the visitor center.

Possible Trails for Camping

Three Sisters Trail (8.8 miles/14.2 km)

This trail begins in A-Loop of the campground, then loops into the wilderness and ends at the Skull Cave parking area at the end of the Lyons Trail.

Missing Link Trail (1.1 miles/1.8 km)

This trail begins at the Skull Cave/ Big Painted parking area and travels south towards the campground. The trail then connects with Bunchgrass Trail, which leads to the campground's B-Loop.

Lyons Trail (9.8 miles/15.8 km)

Formerly a Monument road, this trail crosses the wilderness area running north and south between Skull Cave parking area and Hospital Rock.

Whitney Butte Trail (3.3 miles/5.3 km)

Beginning at the Merrill Cave parking area, the trail passes through wilderness and curves around Whitney Butte and rewards hikers with fantastic views of Mt. Shasta and the Callahan lava flow.

Big Nasty Trail (2 miles/3.2 km)

A semi-loop trail, starting and ending at Mammoth Crater, takes you to the edge of the Monument boundary, where you can enjoy the shade of giant ponderosa pines.

NOTE: A loop trail can be achieved from the campground by hiking the Three Sisters Trail, Lyons Trail, and Missing Link/Bunchgrass Trails. Inquire the visitor center for more information.

Natural Hazards

Mountain Lions – Rarely seen in the Monument, if you encounter one please remember to do the following:

- **Don't run** or approach the Mountain Lion.
- Make yourself **appear as tall and as big as you can**.
- **Hold your ground, wave your hands, and shout!**
- Convince the lion that you are not prey.
- If the lion behaves aggressively, throw stones.
- Please report all sightings to a ranger.

Rattlesnakes – Western rattlesnakes are found throughout the Monument. They are usually more active

from spring to fall, but have been sighted during mild winters. In most cases, the snake will move off the trail. If you approach a snake, give it a wide range of space. Please report sightings if they are found in the campground or anywhere they might be a threat to visitors.