



Backcountry Camping - Skill Level Worksheet

Which level best describes your experience?

New:

I have not carried a backpack with tent, stove and water.

My campsites have been marked with a gravel pad, fire ring or marker.

I'm not sure how to read a trail map, cook on a backcountry stove, or hang a bear bag.

I've always used a toilet and am not sure what to do in the woods.

Next step: You can enjoy some great trips in Shenandoah by backpacking to a campground or lodge for the night until you take a class or find a more experienced person to go with you.

Beginner:

I've carried a backpack with tent, stove and water for less than 4 miles in mountainous terrain.

I have used trail maps to find my way around while hiking.

I haven't learned how to tell how steep an area is by reading the lines on a topographic map.

I have identified suitable, legal campsites that other people have used (pre-existing sites).

I have practiced hanging a bear bag and cooking on my backcountry stove.

I know how to choose an appropriate place to defecate and will properly bury my waste.

I understand the seven principles of Leave No Trace, including planning ahead.

I understand all of the backcountry regulations at Shenandoah National Park.

Next step: Try one of our two-night beginner trips with the first night in a campground and the second night in the backcountry, or a one-night trip entirely in the backcountry. If that goes well, and you are in excellent physical condition, move on to the **strenuous beginner** trips.

Intermediate:

I've carried a backpack with tent, stove and water for at least 4 miles in mountainous terrain.

I use topographic maps to find water (and level areas, optional), and a compass for general direction.

I've identified suitable, legal campsites that other people have used (pre-existing sites).

I have studied how to find and camp on a "pristine" site, so as to leave no trace of my stay.

I am experienced in hanging a bear bag and cooking on my backcountry stove.

I am experienced in choosing an appropriate place to defecate and properly burying my waste.

I practice the seven principles of Leave No Trace, including planning my social impact.

I understand all of the backcountry regulations at Shenandoah National Park.

Next step: You have enough experience for most of the trails in the park. Still, give yourself plenty of time to set up and take down your camp so that you can truly Leave No Trace. (First day 1-4 miles, additional days 6-8 miles). As you gain camping experience and physical endurance, you can increase your trip mileage if desired.

Advanced:

All of the intermediate skills, plus:

I can orienteer with map and compass to find my way through the woods without a trail.

I frequently hike well out of sight of the trail before beginning to look for a campsite.

I am skilled in wilderness first aid and prepared to take care of myself in emergency situations.

Now all of Shenandoah can be yours!



Trip Planning Worksheet - Expectations, Experience, and Practicalities

Things to consider while planning **your** trip. You **do not** need to mail this form in to obtain a permit.

Expectations:

- We want a physically challenging trip.
- We want a relaxing trip.
- We want to go to the most popular sites at the busiest time.
- We want to get away from the crowds.
- _____
- _____

Physical Ability:

Scale of one to ten: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 = Someone in our group is not very fit and may struggle to keep up.

10 = Everyone is used to carrying heavy packs up and down steep inclines.

Length of Trip:

Using your expectations, physical ability and desires as a guide, decide how many miles per day you wish to hike and how many nights you want to stay.

Suggested Miles/Day	Night	Considerations for suggested miles. (Plan your miles based on your situation.)	Planned Miles
0	0	Due to travel or other desires, plan to stay in campground/lodge the first night.	0
1-4	1	Plan to start by noon (or by 10 a.m. in the late fall through winter).	
6-8	2	We exercise regularly, but not by carrying a pack in the mountains.	
6-8	3	"	
6-8	4	"	
?	Last	What are my travel plans to get back home?	
		Total number of nights in the backcountry and total mileage	

Skill Level:

See the SNP backcountry camping skill level worksheet to determine your level of skills with topographic map reading, pristine site camping, bear country skills, etc. Then circle below:

Most- skilled members skills:	new	beginner	intermediate	advanced
Least- skilled members skills:	new	beginner	intermediate	advanced
Our group :	new	beginner	intermediate	advanced

Now plan **your** specific trip using guide books and maps, or select a trip idea from one of our many plans and modify it to meet your needs.