



## Backcountry Camping - Skill Level Worksheet

Which level best describes your experience?

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### 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.

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### 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.

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### 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.

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### 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!