



Leave No Trace for Hammock Camping

1. Hammocks generally leave a very small footprint and are good examples of minimum impact shelters. When used with appropriate, tree-friendly suspension systems, hammocks often do not alter the natural environment. The smaller your footprint, the less likely you are to impact plants or wildlife. Also, hammocks require no ground leveling, trenching or staking.
2. Use “tree saver” straps. These are 0.75”-1.5” wide straps made out of webbing that go around the tree to minimize girdling and damage to the bark and cambium layer, which can cause wood tissue death. **Never** use anything thinner than .75” and that’s made from a non-tree-friendly material, such as plastic zip cords. **Never** hammer/screw anything into the trees.
3. Set up hammock camp at least 200 feet away from any water source to protect riparian areas (the interface between land and an area of water.) These areas provide unique plant habitats and communities, and are significant in soil stabilization.
4. Look for an established, or already existing, campsite to set up your hammock. Remember, “Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.” Keep campsites small and focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent. If you are hammocking in a large group, consider breaking down into smaller groups to prevent unnecessary disturbance.
5. Don’t hang your hammock from any dead trees. You could hurt yourself, as dead trees can be very hazardous. Even if your chosen tree looks alive, check above you for dead branches that could fall.
6. Check with local land managers to ensure that the area allows for hammocking. Some state and local parks, for instance, prohibit hanging hammocks, so double check to avoid breaking the rules and creating unnecessary impacts.
7. When you find two suitable hammocking trees, make sure to thoroughly check the ground area for sensitive plant life (plants at higher elevations are damaged easier and recover slower than those found at lower elevations), wildlife habitat and potential hazards like yellow jacket nests or poisonous plants – ideally, you’d choose an area with little or no ground cover. Always check for roots and lichen, and avoid stepping on them entirely. Altering an area is not recommended. Take care to minimize transporting non-native or invasive species from one area to another by cleaning equipment between trips.
8. It is recommended that you do not hang your hammock more than 18” off the ground to prevent accidents and to avoid damage to higher branches and leaves. Always hang your hammock on the thickest part of the tree trunk and avoid trees that bend or those found in wet areas – they could potentially become uprooted, and wet soils are far more susceptible to impact than dry ground.

9. Always take down your hammock whenever you leave your campsite to prevent animals or small children (if there are any around) from getting tangled up in it. When you are done, pack everything up and inspect your campsite and surrounding area for anything you could have left behind. Double check to ensure that all trash and leftover food is packed up and taken with you.
10. As always, clean up after yourself! Leave the spot just the way you found it.

For more on the Leave No Trace Seven Principles, check them out here: <http://lnt.org/learn/7-principles> or call 1.800.332.4100