



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 1 inch or wider straps made out of webbing that go around the tree to minimize girdling and damage to the bark and cambium layer. Never use anything thinner than 1 inch and that's made from a non-tree-friendly material. Never hammer or screw anything into the trees.
3. Use a loose hang with the straps to prevent damage to the tree. Wrap the straps around the trunk once and secure the ends as instructed by the hammock manufacturer. The straps should hang a bit freely until getting into the hammock. Do not use a tight hang and wrap the straps around the tree multiple times or use knots to secure. A tight hang can cause twisting and squishing of the bark and phloem.
4. Set up your 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.
5. 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 setting up in smaller groups at multiple sites to prevent unnecessary disturbance.
6. Set up your hammock on living trees. Select trees that are at least 6 inches in diameter, preferably with hard bark and no lichen. Do not 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. 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 more susceptible to impact than dry ground.

7. 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 would 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 species from one area to another by cleaning equipment between trips.
8. It is recommended that you hang your hammock less than 5 feet off the ground to prevent accidents and to avoid damage to higher branches and leaves.
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. 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.
11. As always, clean up after yourself and those you are camping with. Leave the spot just the way you found it.