



Leave No Trace and Social Media

There is little question that social media plays a role in the promotion of various outdoor locations, and in some cases, has led to significant resource and social impacts. It's logical to ask, "*Would this place be as impacted as it is now had it not been for Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat or Pintrest?*" Social media, like any tool or technology, can be a force for good or it can have the opposite effect. What if every social media post also included a message of stewardship? Think how different things would or could be if this were the case.

Leave No Trace isn't black or white, right or wrong. It's a framework for making good decisions about enjoying the outdoors responsibly, regardless of how one chooses to do so. If outdoor enthusiasts stop and think about the potential impacts and associated consequences of a particular action, it can go a long way towards ensuring protection of our shared outdoor spaces. To that end, we encourage outdoor enthusiasts to stop and think about their actions and the potential consequences of posting pictures, GPS data, detailed maps, etc. to social media. Furthermore, we urge people to think about both the protection and sustainability of the resource and the visitors who come after them.

When posting to social media, consider the following:

Tag thoughtfully – avoid tagging (or geotagging) specific locations. Instead, tag a general location such as a state or region, if any at all. While tagging can seem innocent, it can also lead to significant impacts to particular places.

Be mindful of what your images portray – give some thought to what your images may encourage others to do. Images that demonstrate good Leave No Trace practices and stewardship are always in style.

Give back to places you love – invest your own sweat equity into the outdoor spaces and places you care about. Learn about volunteer stewardship opportunities and get involved in the protection of our shared lands.

Encourage and inspire Leave No Trace in social media posts – given the millions of social media users in the world, think of the incredible potential that social media has to educate outdoor enthusiasts – first timers to seasoned adventurers – about enjoying our wild lands responsibly.

As we have contemplated this issue we're left wondering what the future will bring in terms of technology, communication, and outdoor recreation. Will posting pictures to social media be a thing of the past in five years? None of us know. Social media, if used the right way, is a powerful tool that can motivate a nation of outdoor advocates to enthusiastically and collectively take care of the places we share and cherish.

Enjoy Your World, Leave No Trace!

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