



BOULDERWISE SUMMER RECREATION GUIDE



The BoulderWise campaign celebrates Boulder's commitment to exploring, playing, living and working responsibly in the outdoors and around town. Through this community-wide effort, Visit Boulder and Leave No Trace are helping visitors, residents, and businesses protect what makes this place so special: our open spaces, trails and welcoming spirit.

This guide is designed for local partners, hospitality staff and educators who share that commitment. It offers clear, actionable behaviors supported by science, so you can explain not just what to do, but why it matters. By spreading this knowledge, we empower everyone in Boulder to make small, meaningful choices that add up to a big difference. Knowledge is power, and together, we can keep Boulder beautiful, healthy and leading the way in sustainability.

Know Before You Go

Action: Check weather, trail conditions and parking before heading out. Bring water, snacks and layers for Colorado's rapidly changing weather.

Why It Matters: Being prepared prevents rescue incidents and reduces off-trail detours that damage fragile ecosystems. Visitors who plan ahead make safer choices and lower their environmental impact. ¹

Action: Research trail difficulty and altitude before your hike.

Why It Matters: Underestimating elevation gain or exposure can lead to dehydration and overexertion. Studies show that improved pre-trip education enhances visitor safety and limits resource strain on search-and-rescue services. ²

Stick to Trails

Action: Stay on marked trails and avoid shortcuts, even when paths are wet or crowded.

Why It Matters: Stepping off-trail compacts soil, crushes native plants and widens trails. Damaged vegetation and soil crusts can take years or decades to recover. ^{3 4}

Action: Hike single file in the middle of the trail.

Why It Matters: Walking around puddles or cutting switchbacks accelerates erosion and widens trail corridors, increasing sediment runoff into nearby creeks. ⁵

Practice Petiquette

Action: Keep pets leashed where required and always pick up pet waste.

Why It Matters: Pet waste contains harmful bacteria like E. coli and Giardia, which can contaminate waterways and spread disease to wildlife and people. ⁶

Action: Carry extra bags and dispose of them in a trash bin or take them home if bins are full.

Why It Matters: Left-behind waste adds nutrients to the soil that favor invasive plant growth and degrade habitat quality. ⁷

Trash Your Trash

Action: Pack out everything you bring in, including food wrappers, cans, toilet paper, fruit peels and litter.

Why It Matters: Even biodegradable items take months to decompose and attract wildlife to human food, altering animal behavior and increasing conflict. ⁸

Action: Recycle and compost properly.

Why It Matters: Sorting waste correctly reduces landfill volume and keeps contaminants like plastics out of soil and waterways. ⁹

Bring Your Own Reusables

Action: Carry a refillable water bottle, reusable utensils and shopping bags during your stay.

Why It Matters: Reducing single-use plastics lessens pressure on local waste management systems and prevents litter that harms wildlife. ¹⁰

Action: Choose locally packaged products when shopping.

Why It Matters: Supporting local businesses and minimizing packaging reduces transportation emissions and waste. ¹¹

Cultivate Kindness

Action: Share trails courteously. Yield to uphill travelers and give space to others.

Why It Matters: Positive encounters build community. Stick to trails to prevent erosion, trail widening, or damaging trailside plants. ¹²

Action: Keep noise low and greet fellow visitors.

Why It Matters: Wildlife responds less strongly to predictable, calm human behavior and considerate recreation improves everyone's outdoor experience. ¹³

Be a Transit Hero

Action: Use local buses, hotel shuttles, or bikeshare to reach trailheads and downtown.

Why It Matters: Fewer cars mean cleaner air and less congestion around open spaces. Transportation contributes significantly to recreation-related emissions, so shared transit is one of the easiest ways to cut your footprint. ¹⁴

Action: Walk or cycle for short trips when possible.

Why It Matters: Active transportation reduces carbon emissions, limits parking demand in neighborhoods near trailheads and supports Boulder's sustainable mobility goals. ¹⁵

Research Sources

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