

Wildlife Safety

Bears are generally shy and avoid human contact. However, there are some precautions you can take to avoid encounters with bears if you camp and hike in bear country. You are responsible for doing all you can to prevent conflicts with bears. If a bear gets food from you, it's likely to behave more aggressively toward the next people it meets. Don't reward a bear for associating with people!



KEEP YOUR CAMP CLEAN Store your food and garbage properly at all times. Keep your tent and sleeping bag free of all food smells. Store the clothes you wore while cooking or eating with your food. Burn all grease off grills and camp stoves. Wipe table and cleanup eating area thoroughly.

STORE YOUR FOOD SAFELY Store all your food and coolers in your car trunk or suspended from a tree--at least 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet out from the tree trunk. Don't underestimate the ingenuity of a bear!

DISPOSE OF GARBAGE PROPERLY Put it in bear-proof garbage cans where available or secure it with your food and then pack it out. Don't burn or bury garbage. Bears will dig it up.

SLEEP WELL AWAY FROM FOOD AREAS Move some distance away from your cooking area or food storage site. (If you have children, keep in mind not to let them bring food into the tent with them.)

STORE ANY TOILETRIES SAFELY Store them with your food. Like other scents, the smell of toiletries may attract bears. Abstain from sexual activity. Practice good personal hygiene.

There are no definite rules about what to do if you meet a bear. In almost all cases, the bear will detect you first and will leave the area. Bear attacks are rare compared to the number of close encounters. However, if you do meet a bear before it has had time to leave an area, here are some suggestions.

REMEMBER: Every situation is different with respect to the bear, the terrain, the people and their activity.

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STAY CALM If you see a bear and it hasn't seen you, calmly leave the area. As you move away, talk aloud to let the bear discover your presence.

STOP Back away slowly while facing the bear. Avoid direct eye contact as bears may perceive this as a threat. Give the bear plenty of room to escape. Wild bears rarely attack people unless they feel threatened or provoked.

If on a trail, step off the trail on the downhill side and slowly leave the area. Don't run or make any sudden movements. Running is likely to prompt the bear to give chase and you can't outrun a bear.

SPEAK SOFTLY This may reassure the bear that no harm is meant to it. Try not to show fear.

Coming between a female and her cubs can be dangerous. If a cub is nearby, try to move away from it. Be alert--other cubs may be in the area.

Bears use all their senses to try to identify what you are. **REMEMBER:** Their eyesight is good and their sense of smell is acute. If a bear stands upright or moves closer, it may be trying to detect smells in the air. This isn't a sign of aggression. Once it identifies you, it may leave the area or try to intimidate you by charging to within a few feet before it withdraws.

FIGHT BACK If a bear attacks you. Bears have been driven away when people have fought back with rocks, sticks, binoculars and even their bare hands.

IF YOU ENCOUNTER A MOUNTAIN LION Never run past or from a cougar. This may trigger their instinct to chase. Make eye contact. Stand your ground. Pick up small children without, if possible, turning away or bending over.

Never bend over or crouch down. Doing so causes humans to resemble four-legged prey animals. Crouching down or bending over also makes the neck and back of the head vulnerable.

If you encounter a cougar, make yourself appear larger, more aggressive. Open your jacket, raise your arms, and throw stones, branches, etc., without turning away. Wave raised arms slowly, and speak slowly, firmly, loudly to disrupt and discourage predatory behavior.

Try to remain standing to protect head and neck and, if attacked, fight back with whatever is at hand (without turning your back)—people have utilized rocks, jackets, garden tools, tree branches, and even bare hands to turn away cougars.