

Camping in Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Frontcountry Camping

The park has 10 developed campgrounds, including Cades Cove and Smokemont, which are open year-round. Amenities include restrooms with cold running water, flush toilets, fire grates, and picnic tables. Some campgrounds (Cades Cove, Elkmont, Smokemont) offer 5-amp electrical outlets for medical devices only. Reservations are required in peak season and can be made up to 6 months in advance at [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov).

Backcountry Camping

Permits are required for all backpacking sites and shelters. Over 100 backcountry campsites are available, hike-in only, with minimal facilities. Campers must store food in bear-proof containers or cable systems provided.

Group & Horse Camps

Large groups (7–30 people) can reserve group campgrounds such as Big Creek, Cades Cove, and Elkmont. Horse camps include hitch racks, water, and primitive facilities, located at Anthony Creek, Big Creek, Cataloochee, and more. Reservations are required.

Campground Rules

- Camping only in designated sites or shelters.
 - Maximum stay: 14 consecutive days.
 - Max 6 people and 2 vehicles per site.
 - Fires allowed only in fire rings or grills.
 - Only certified heat-treated firewood or dead-and-down wood may be used.
 - Quiet hours: 10 p.m. – 6 a.m.
-

Tips for Campers

- Arrive early to set up before dark.
- Bring rain gear – the Smokies are among the wettest U.S. regions.
- Check weather and trail conditions in advance.
- Carry a detailed map – cell service is limited.
- Respect wildlife: never feed animals.
- Leave no trace: pack out everything you bring.