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Canine Courtesy: Don't Let Sleeping Poo Lie

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May 25, 2011 jadler Comments

Not everyone loves dogs and even fewer love dogs on trails. It's our fault. We let our best friends run wild, we leave poo in conspicuous places and we shrug our shoulders if a stranger happens to get nervous when your pitbull stuffs his nose in their crotch. Irresponsible dog owners crap on the rest of us. It's no wonder that canine organizations fight a losing battle trying to open up dog parks and lease-free trails.



At eight weeks old, my Australian shepherd was my crag dog, climbing in Massacre Rocks, Idaho. I raised her to spend her days outdoors with me whether we took short day hikes, five-day excursions, or floated rivers. Her rules were simple yet demanding – no chasing critters, or runners or bikers or kids. No barking, no biting, no fighting with other dogs. Until we mastered those demands she stayed on lead.

Her rules for me were nearly as daunting and even more gruesome. I had to train her to be friendly to everyone, I had to find appropriate, dog-friendly trails and I had to carry her poop.

If you want more places to go with Rover you need to start rolling over and playing the game.



The Rules of Engagement Leash your Pup

When you see others on the trail, leash up your dog until they pass. Those hiking without canine companions expect you to control your pet and they make it their duty to protect wildlife, unseen (and unborn) children, and the elderly from your little monster. If they think for one instant that your dog isn't the fluff buddy he is, you will create an anti-dog person instantly.

Bring a Bag

Visible brown doggy plops on our trails are downright rude. Some trailheads sport poopbag stations, but not all, so bring your own plastic bags or at the very least find a way to toss off the doo so it's downwind and out of sight.

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By carrying poop insults your sensibilities than leave Fido home; or strap a dogpack on him so he can carry his own mess. Vets say dogs can carry up to one third of their body weight if it's not too hot.

Bring Food (for two)

Bring water and snacks for two. Unless you plan to hike near water, you're not the only one who will be thirsty during the day. Zukes "Powerbones" make a handy snack and so does jerky. Cool off an overheated pooch by dribbling water over his belly and groin area.

Right of Way

Bikers and horses get the right of the way when it comes to hikers, kids and dogs. A simple step off the trail will allow them to pass quickly.

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When in Rome...

Pay attention to the area's rules about dogs. Is it public land, a watershed area or national park? You can find out by going to the government website that manages the land.

An old boyfriend once asked me to join him in Moab for mountain biking. Though we started at the same time, he disappeared and I didn't see him until hours later, back at the car. I rode alone. Dog's don't do that to you. They're watching out for you and loving every minute of the experience *with you*. Unlike the boyfriend. It's up to us to ensure our pets continue to share our everyday outdoor adventures.

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