

Portable Toilets

Popular outdoor destinations attract higher numbers of visitors, and receive more impact to the surrounding natural resources. This can result in serious human health and sanitation problems, and may force land managers to implement rules and regulations designed to protect the natural resources and enhance public health and safety.

Public restroom facilities are not always available, especially in remote areas, where installing, servicing, and maintaining such facilities may not be feasible or cost-prohibitive. Visitors to some public lands may be required by law to carry out their waste using a portable toilet. Portable toilets (also called “pack it out” toilets) are already familiar to many outdoor enthusiasts, including boaters, hikers, rock climbers, ATV riders, and others.

Any visitor to the public lands can help improve their favorite destinations by carrying and using a portable toilet system as a routine part of their outdoor activities.

Portable toilet systems are now available in a variety of designs, to accommodate a range of outdoor activities. With a little research and preparation, you will be able to select a toilet system that is right for your activity and group size.

Types of Portable Toilets

A pack-it-out toilet system is typically defined as one that is “portable and containerized”. Ideally, a good toilet system can also be washed and re-used. In addition to many excellent commercial products, effective toilets can also be improvised using inexpensive materials available at most hardware or sporting goods stores.

Most toilet systems consist of a sturdy container or puncture-resistant bag, with either a liquid or dry base material inside. The job of the container is to effectively enclose and transport the waste until it may be properly disposed of. Five-gallon buckets with rubber gaskets in the lids are one common example. The job of the base ingredient (either liquid or dry) is to reduce odors and make waste disposal and cleanup much easier.

Liquid-based toilets commonly use water and some kind of chemical treatment (preferably non-formaldehyde), and are often designed to be compatible with RV dump stations for convenient disposal and cleaning. Dry-based toilets may utilize potting soil, kitty litter, sawdust, special powders, or other dry ingredients instead of a liquid, and are frequently lighter and less likely to leak in the event of mishap.

Individual waste removal bags are available for those requiring a compact, lightweight option. These products typically consist of a heavy-duty “bag within a bag” that contains a special powder inside. The powder turns liquids to gel on contact, reduces odor, and helps to break down the waste. Many of these bag products are considered “treated waste” (similar to a baby diaper) and are approved for landfill disposal. Check local laws to determine what is legal for use in the area you will be visiting.

The use of portable toilets greatly reduces collective user impacts to popular outdoor destinations and fragile natural resources. Before you leave, stop and look behind you to see that you have done all you can to minimize the traces of your visit and are leaving a clean slate for the next visitors.

For More Information

Many outdoor sporting goods stores carry a variety of portable toilet products and accessories available for purchase online or at retail locations. Check with your local businesses to see what is offered in your area. The following is a partial list of several portable toilet online resources to help get you started:

<http://www.cleanwaste.com>

Compact and lightweight bag systems, portable commodes, folding toilets, privacy tents.

<http://www.eco-safe.net>

Complete washable, reusable portable toilet systems.

<http://relianceproducts.com>

Portable commodes, bag systems, and other sanitation products.

<http://www.traveljohn.com>

Bag systems, portable commodes, privacy tents.

<http://www.ultimatepail.com>

Sturdy, leak proof, plastic buckets in a variety of sizes.

<http://www.whennaturecalls.com>

“RESTOP” bag systems, bucket commodes, privacy tents.



Because laws vary from place to place, always check with local land management agencies to determine what the specific requirements are for the area you plan to visit. With a little forethought and preparation, you can do your part in helping to keep your favorite outdoor places clean, healthy, and ready for future generations. Thank you!



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