

How to Responsibly Visit Tribal Nations and Alaska Native Villages

An Education Entry Point for Non-Indigenous Guests

The voice and lived experiences described in this resource come from a 25-member group of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian community members approaching education solutions for guests spending time in Indigenous communities across America.

1. Indigenous Means Today

More than 2.3 million people across America (the lower 48 states, Alaska, Hawaii) are a part of unique Indigenous communities that celebrate distinct culture, tradition and heritage. We are the living descendants of pre-invasion inhabitants of lands now dominated by others. We are American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians. **We have always been here and we have never left.**



2. Responsible Visitation and You

Today, many of our communities welcome you as guests and travelers to the lands of our ancestors. However, our lands, water sources and communities themselves face many long-lasting negative impacts from uninformed guest actions.

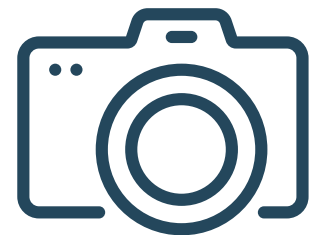
Many visitors simply do not have adequate information about appropriate and respectful behaviors. Sometimes these uninformed actions are the result of assumptions made by visitors. What lacks is a basic understanding of how to prepare for a responsible and enjoyable visit to Tribal Nations, Alaska Native Villages and Hawaiian Homelands.



3. Impacts Caused by Uninformed Guests

While there may not be a harmful intention, uninformed guests can have devastating consequences. Some are familiar; trash and litter; human and pet waste; wildfires; water contamination; damage to vegetation and soils; and the spread of invasive species.

Other impacts, however, are completely unique: damage to sacred sites; uninformed harvesting of medicinal plants; desecration of graves; taking photographs of certain ceremonies; assuming all community dwellings are open to guests and more.



4. Native Nations and Communities vs. Public Lands:

Native Nations and Communities		Public Lands
All across the United States	Where are these areas?	All across the United States
Cultural heritage, outdoor recreation, wildlife viewing	Prioritized Types of Visitor Activities	Outdoor recreation, cultural heritage, wildlife viewing
Tribal Governments	Who manages these areas?	U.S. Department of the Interior (NPS, BLM, Army Corp, Fish and Wildlife), U.S. Department of Agriculture (Forest Service) and State Parks
Yes, sometimes.	Do you need a permit or pre-booking to visit?	Yes, sometimes.
Not always.	Is there infrastructure like public bathrooms?	Generally, but not always.
No. Private homes, sacred sites and certain ceremonies are NOT accessible to visitors.	Are all areas open to visitors?	Generally yes, unless otherwise noted.
Sometimes yes, but other times ABSOLUTELY NOT. It is respectful practice to ask for permission before taking photos. Permits may be required.	Is photography allowed?	Yes. Personal photography is always allowed. Commercial photography requires a pre-arranged permit and approval.
YES!	Are visitors unknowingly causing cultural and ecological impacts?	YES!
No. Different Tribes and Villages will have different rules and regulations. Permits will also vary. Confirm access areas.	Is access within these areas all the same?	No. Different fees, rules, regulations, passes, permits and intended uses exist on public lands.
Tribal Enterprise, Federal Government Assistance	How are these places funded?	U.S. Government and State Governments
Tribal & Federal Jurisdiction	Jurisdiction to Enforce Criminal Activity	Federal and State Jurisdiction
Directly from individual tribes, nations, bands, pueblos, communities and native villages and their websites.	Where can visitors learn more ahead of their visit?	National Park Service, Forest Service and State Park websites.



5. Ways that Visitors Can Help Be Part of the Solution!

Seek out information about the specific community that you will be visiting. Begin unlearning that all Indigenous communities and cultures in the United States are the same—culture is not a monolith. **Native Nations and communities are unique and distinct each with their own stories to tell; some sharing unique information about responsible visitor etiquette.**

Practice the Leave No Trace Seven Principles

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Others



Share this knowledge with your friends and family. You have a tremendous amount of influence with those who you already know.