

Hiking with dogs

Common Questions About Dogs in Coronado National Forest

1. Are dogs allowed on the Coronado National Forest?

That depends. Dogs are NOT allowed in the Pusch Ridge Wilderness Area or Sabino Canyon Recreation Area -- both in the Santa Catalina Mountains. However, aside from these two areas, you can take your dog with you when you hike, picnic, or camp elsewhere on the Coronado.

2. Do I have to keep my dog leashed?

Yes! Always keep your dog leashed, except when inside a vehicle, tent, dog crate, or portable kennel. Do not allow your dog to wander freely on a trail or around a campground or picnic area. You must obey all federal regulations or closures, and you must also obey the state and county leash laws while on National Forest System Lands.

In addition, your dog must wear a collar with current tags at all times.

3. Do I have to pick up dog waste?

Of course. Most federal, state, and county litter laws require it. Dog waste can spread disease to wild animals and it can contaminate wild waters. Picking up dog waste is also just common courtesy to the campers and picnickers nearby or the hikers following you on the trail.

4. Can I leave my dog in camp while I go hiking?

No! Not even for a few minutes. State and county laws prohibit animal cruelty and abandonment. Some local animal cruelty laws prevent you from chaining your dog. You can confine your dog in a suitable crate or in a portable kennel, but you must remain present.

Also, on warm days, remember to place the kennel or crate in the shade. Never leave your dog alone in a car; in desert heat, a car quickly becomes an oven that can injure or kill your pet.

5. What if my dog barks?

An occasional bark can be expected, of course. But dogs that bark uncontrollably are even more annoying in a quiet wilderness setting than in an urban environment. If your dog barks uncontrollably, don't bring it camping with you.

In developed campgrounds, excessive noise after 10:00 p.m. is prohibited. A barking dog after hours in a campground will attract the ire of other campers and can get its owner a hefty citation.

6. During my visit to the National Forest, can't I just let Rover live off the land?

No! While a dog may drink from a stream if it can find one, you should always carry enough clean water with you for your dog, and you should remember to share your water with your dog whenever you drink. It is not advisable to let a dog drink from a stagnant pool or puddle.

Also, feed your dog as you would at home. Don't allow your dog to forage or hunt. Aside from the fact that doing so is prohibited by leash laws and game laws, a dog unused to such a dangerous environment will usually be injured (or worse) by such things as cactus, rattlesnakes, scorpions, desert heat, cliffs, flooded washes, bears, and mountain lions. Further, if you think losing a dog in your neighborhood is bad (and it is), it's much worse to lose a dog in the middle of a remote wilderness. Dogs lost in the wild

have little chance of surviving long. If you lose your dog, contact animal control for the appropriate county.

7. At home, I leave plenty of food in the bowl for my dog. She eats whenever she likes. Can't I do that while I'm camping on the Coronado?

No. This feeding procedure may work at home, but that's because you probably don't have any 300 pound black bears wandering through your house. Bears love dog food. Leaving dog food in a bowl will likely invite a visit to your campsite by a hungry black bear. Just as you should never leave any human food unsecured, lock up the dog food in a vehicle or bear-proof container immediately after your dog finishes her meal.

8. Won't my dog protect me against wild animals?

Most dogs will sound an alarm when they sense nearby wildlife. It is also true that many dogs will defend their owners if necessary. And despite the occasional heart-warming story of a dog saving her owner from a bear attack, the fact is that a single dog, no matter what the breed or how large, is no match for a hungry bear or lion. Even these heart-warming stories often end in tragedy for the dog.

Unfortunately, dogs in the wild often become the prey of prowling black bears and mountain lions -- the scent of a dog in the breeze may actually draw these large carnivores into your camp. Generally, dogs unused to wild surroundings will spend most of the night warning their owner of every rabbit, ground squirrel, and cricket within a hundred yards, until the sleep-deprived and frazzled owner tells the dog to shut up. It is usually about that time -- when the owner is angrily chastising the dog for its incessant warnings -- that a bear or lion wanders into camp. Also, remember that skunks are common visitors to campsites, and they seem to take special delight in spraying curious puppies. So, unless you brought five gallons of tomato juice camping with you to neutralize the skunk odor, the ride home with Lucky in the back seat will be quite memorable.