

# Keeping Clean on the Trail

Most treks and history events will lack shower facilities, but will not lack for dirt and grime. Most of us enjoy any experience more when we're not feeling filthy.

One historically correct way to stay clean is to pack plenty of undergarments. Whether these are 100% modern, 100% historic, or a blend of the two, plan for one change of undergarments per day, including socks, plus a spare set. Being able to quickly bathe and change to fresh undergarments makes all the difference, even if your outer clothes are still dusty.

With a good stock of undergarments, you can plan for a 2- to 4-day trek or encampment with one dress and one set of petticoats, or one pair of trousers, coat, vest. Extra undergarments weight less, and take less room in your gear, than extra outer garments—compare the weight and space requirements of four sets of underclothes versus four pair of jeans! Don't use up your baggage allowance with unnecessary items.

You'll want spare socks to keep your feet clean and dry after any contact with water, or to change into before bed. Going to bed in sweaty socks is a sure way to wake up freezing at midnight.

Women can keep cleaner by securing their hair into three-strand braids or a bun. It's harder for dust and "trail fluff" to take up lodging when your hair is braided back, pinned up, and tucked under a sunbonnet. Simple braids are also easy to take out, give the hair a good brushing to remove dust, and re-braid.

If you have bangs, bring combs or hair-pins to smooth them back from your forehead. Without the option of a daily shampoo, you will not want hair oils sitting on your skin all day. Hairstyles in the pioneer era didn't really include bangs for women, so you'll also be adding period style.

Using a sunbonnet is another way to keep your hair free from dust and grime, and protect your skin and eyes from sunburn, too.

For men, a cap or hat helps prevent dust from settling into the hair.

Avoid one hindrance to cleanliness and sun protection: do not wear makeup. With a cosmetic-free face, you're able to wipe down several times a day without fear of mascara migration, and can reapply sunblock easily, without clogging your pores.

And of course, you can always take a bath!

## How to Take a Sponge Bath

Keep clean by rediscovering a wonderful historic skill: the sponge bath! You will need:

- 2 small washcloths
- 1 hand towel or huck towel (kitchen size)
- A tin cup or mug (two is even nicer)
- At least two mugs-worth of water (warm is a bonus)
- A small piece of soap

Use one cloth for soaping and one for rinsing. This division means you need less water, as the rinse does not get soapy as quickly. If you have only one mug of cup, wet your rinse cloth first.

Determine which parts really need the scrub-down. If only your hands and face are dirty, a quick wipe with plain water may suffice.

If you're feeling gross all over, you can bathe your entire body in about ten minutes. Most people choose to wash in this order:

- Face, neck
- Hands, arms
- Legs, feet
- Underarms, etc

Scrub each area in turn with your soaped cloth, followed by your rinse cloth. A second clear-water rinse is refreshing. A dash of lavender or mint essential oil in the last rinse is practically luxurious!

Towel dry, and you're clean, fresh, and smelling nice. Give your hair a good brushing, change to fresh undergarments, and you're ready to take on the day (or evening.)



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