

# Family Camping

Written By  
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Now that the liberals in Congress have been appeased let's get on with the program. When I was about the size of that first kid in the string on this forest trail here I did some rugged camping. I would take off into the Arizona desert all by my little lonesome and stay for a minimum of two days and a maximum of two weeks. The only thing that went with me was what happened to be in my pockets when I decided to head out. That's right, no water, no food, no bedding, no tools, and no toilet paper either.

**I roughed it.**

At the age of seventeen the Army taught me about tents, bedrolls, cooking gear and other such things as civilization can put in the way of having a good time. Fortunately I was soon invited to join the

Combat Development Experimentation Command and I had a wonderful time. I never would have left -- except the regular army kept taking over our lives again every time we went back to living in the barracks.

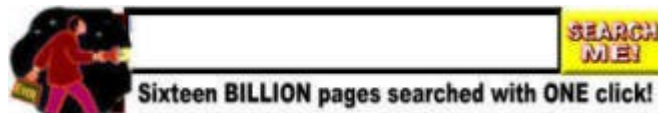
After my discharge my natural destination for a family vacation was camping. My girls loved it. Most of them have families of their own now but they still think camping is IT when vacation time comes up. My wife is a born naturalist. In her opinion the best vacation we've ever had together was when we roughed it on a primitive reservation.



We're old now, with bones that won't bend and medical needs that won't wait. I admit we've had to make some accommodations, but we still love to go camping. You know what, it's even more fun camping out with a wheelbarrow full of pills than it is to sit at home and be civilized.

I'm going to start out by showing you how to make this event one that 92% of your family will thoroughly enjoy. That's going to put a load of responsibility on your shoulders because the nitty gritty stuff is stuck away elsewhere. You'll have to dig away through the whole book to find it.

Let's start out with the theory that there are camping sites that are all things to all families. In your family you have people who love: fishing, hunting, swimming, camping out, living in, chasing butterflies, taking pictures, hiking, biking, riding horses, eating ice cream, chewing granola bars, climbing cliffs and experiencing a real pow-wow. How are you ever going to satisfy everyone?



The secret solution to your problem comes in the shape of a word called: **"PROX EMMA TEE."**

For example.. you go to [Thunderbird Lake](#), near [Norman Oklahoma](#), and



here you are with swimming, fishing, canoeing, hiking, basketball, camping for tent, trailer, or RV, AND for that night-life-lover in the bunch, a casino where you can watch your money rattle down the tubes. Deer are tame enough here to almost rub noses on your fist. Turkeys are tame too. As the third largest city in the state, Norman offers full access to civilization.

Now, if your family has the varied interests of wanting to pet tigers, cuddle up with lions, hunt deer, fishing and shopping for antiques you would be able to satisfy everyone by establishing your base camp near [Eureka Springs](#), Arkansas.

If you want to camp out in the Arches National Park of Utah you can tempt your family to go along by suggesting a side trip up the track without a paddle on the Durango Silverton Railroad, AND -- as a super bonus -- offer them the opportunity to hike (or ride) through the Mesa Verde area. Just camp a few days at each one.



The word "camping" can take in a lot of territory. It can mean [backpacking](#). It can be throwing up a tent near a lake or stream. It can mean taking an RV, and it can also mean living in a [cabin or lodge](#). Purists in the family can always drag their sleeping bags out into the brush while everyone else cuddles up to the flickering flames in the fireplace and turns on the television or fires up the computer.

Playing the proximity game can give everyone a good shot at getting exactly what they want out of the vacation.

Camping (real camping, not the bribery you have to pay off in offering proximity to the shopping centers part) gives everyone the chance to experience wildlife firsthand. You don't have to kill wildlife to enjoy your outing. As [Chuck Fitzgerald](#) says: "While hunting elk in Arizona a few years ago, I found myself alone in a high forest nearly ten miles from the pavement and about two miles from camp. I had decided to spend late afternoon and evening sitting beneath a forty foot pine tree and wait for an elk to walk by. This plan seemed innocent enough but as the day's light began to disappear shooting an elk might not be such a good idea since I was by myself and I was an hour from camp. This is ironic to say, because shooting an elk was the purpose of my being in the woods to begin with."

I know Chuck's area well; in fact, I've had game run over me there. But like he says, those pine trees were made for sitting under. Likewise, camping delivers many physical benefits because it involves outdoor activities and according to enthusiasts, camping imparts confidence in children as well as offers opportunity for adult campers to challenge themselves when in unfamiliar surroundings.

## Day Hiking

Day hiking is becoming more popular with campers of all ages. Anyone capable of walking long distances can certainly do this. Even people like me that can't walk long distances can enjoy the trip, breathe the air, feel the wind and find the sun. A day hikers' objective is to hike or walk for the day and return to the place of origin that same day, planning in all innocence to arrive back at their campsite just as night falls. The human heart, hearts like mine anyway, seldom know when they should stop, turn around, and go back. There's always another bush to investigate



an outcropping of rock to investigate, and just the burning need to see how the hill lies on its other side.

Besides being able to walk long distances, you must also be ready for any weather conditions as well as having the right tools, skills and techniques needed so you can find the right route back to your campsite. One very important thing in hiking is selecting the correct footwear.

Because hiking is defined as walking -- which simply means being "on your feet" -- you must purchase footwear designed specifically for hiking and that primarily give your feet comfort while you are walking. Never purchase footwear solely based on how good they look.

Good lugs are essential for climbing and fairly good for hiking. My Caterpillar boots have lasted twenty years now and you can't tell they've ever been worn. But lugs will slow you down if the ground gets wet. When I was hunting diamonds in [Murfreesboro](#) one year the mud got almost eight inches thick on the bottom of my lugs. Meanwhile, the sandier and rockier

the terrain is, the more your lugs will help you get to the top of the mountain, and back down again.



## RV Camping

RV stands for Recreational Vehicle and RV campers embrace the liberty of traveling at their "own time" and are able to camp in different places while not sacrificing comfort that RVs offer.



An RV is comparable to a small lodge but it's on wheels and normally comes complete with heater, oven, refrigerator, shower, stove, beds, toilet, and a "12-volt" electrical power source.

According to many RVers, they enjoy their "mini hotel" because they are always "packed and ready-to-go".

Furthermore, they enjoy the cooking, bathing and sleeping convenience the vehicle offers while in a distant or remote campground.

For individuals who never experienced camping in an RV but thinking of purchasing one, renting one first would be a very sensible decision so you will see if the RV lifestyle suits you.

## Backpacking Camping

Backpacking is generally the most exciting and basic way to experience a wilderness adventure.

Backpacking adds new excitement and elements to any hiking experience because it extends your visit in the backwoods. You may travel far into the wilderness because you are not obliged to go back to your campsite at the day's end.

Backpacking is simply exploring on foot beautiful and wild country, being self-sufficient, while hiking with camping essentials in a comfortable backpack and set camp mostly in undeveloped and primitive areas.

Put simply, backpacking entails having to carry a pack of essential camping supplies on your "back." The longer your trip, the more supplies you carry. What you will be taking along with you as well as how distant you will hike actually depends on you.

Preparing for your backpacking trip involves assembling, selecting and packing supplies and gear that you need and want to bring along with you.

Selecting your backpacking gear is very significant so as to have a successful trip. Excessive gear or specifically the wrong kind of backpacking gear can bring about an extremely heavy weight load that will spoil your hike. When I became an Assistant Scout Master the very first thing given to me was a walking stick. Too many people reject a walking stick because they confuse it with [a cane](#). A cane is used primarily to help someone with a weak leg to lessen the weight on it. A walking stick is used to help healthy walkers balance the load, pull the body up, push the body through and can be used to fend off animals with aggressive behavior. I have used them lately for added balance in crossing narrow pole bridges. In short walking sticks can be life savers.

Likewise, incorrect or too little gear will result in discomfort and -- under certain conditions -- may even be dangerous.

[The internet](#) is filled with stores specifically devoted to backpacking supplies and gear as well as information. Studying your backpacking gear will enable you to purchase the right gear that you need.

The selections for backpacking gear are always evolving, ongoing and constantly changing. Find out which one best suits your backpacking requirements in the area you are going to THIS time.

Backpacking equipment generally costs more compared to car camping, however much less when compared to RV camping and take note, backpacking campsites are usually free.

## Tent Camping

Tent camping usually attracts families with children because children are primarily the ones that enjoy it the most and because it is rugged and inexpensive.

Tent camping employs a vehicle to transport camping equipment to any established campground that offers full amenities and allow direct car access.



Whatever type you choose, with safety in mind, camping is sure to be a fun filled experience the whole family will love and will look forward to every season. While you are there, schedule time to lay out beneath the stars and try to name them for the family. If your skills are pathetic in that department, ask around camp if anyone there knows the stars like the back of their hand. There is sure to be at least one Saturday night expert.



At any regular campsite you'll find one or two animals that have adapted to the presence of man and now consider him a source of great wealth. I was at one site where a boomer waddled up just like he was going to spit in my eye. Naturally, the kids loved it. If your kids would love it too then look for petting zoos close to where you want to camp.

# Summer, Winter, Spring or Fall

What Is The Best Season For You To Go Camping?

Different camping seasons impart different lights and various views.

## Summer camping

The summer is the most popular season for campers because the weather is dry and warm. Campsites are understandably more crowded during the summer, but the extra noise can keep the snakes out of camp too. You need to plan ahead, make reservations and arrive early so to find a good campground especially during weekends.

## Winter camping

There are some people that find winter camping more satisfying compared to the summer months, because they say, winter camping requires a specific strength and courage that summer camping does not. If you love the challenge it brings, then consider "winter camping". You can enjoy sleeping in "mild weather" outside.

Likewise, it gives you added "self-confidence" realizing that you actually can endure the preparedness and ingenuity this kind of outdoor adventure requires.

Certainly, there are many advantages to camping during winter; no snakes, few bugs, lazy flies, sleeping bears, dust and mosquitoes have settled down, plus the winter wilderness views are breathtaking.

You can go snowmobiling, snowshoeing, "cross-country skiing" and engage in many heartening challenges. Furthermore, campgrounds during winter will most likely be quiet, empty and normally cheap.

However, lack of preparation and readiness brings dangers. There are many hazards and dangers that one needs to be familiar with, like large quantities of snow falling from "overhead trees". But with good planning, you can enjoy the slower pace of winter camping.

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## Here are some reminders for winter camping:

1. Drink plenty of water to fight or avoid hypothermia because water effectively replaces all the moisture that was expelled from the body due to constant heavy breathing. Just drink water even when you feel you are not thirsty. The recommendation is one gallon of water a day – per person. It tastes better coming out of the ground.



2. At signs of an approaching storm, immediately put your rain gear on. Should you get wet, change right away to warm and dry clothing, because moist clothes will quickly suck heat from your body.
3. Remember to pace yourself in every activity. At one time in my life I could work sixty straight hours of hard, physical activity, all because I paced myself and “rested between heartbeats.” Most people pace themselves automatically for frustration on long trips. They are all right for the first  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the trip, but that last quarter has them leaning against the traces and biting their nails. **“Are we there yet?”** With a little practice you can do the same pacing for the entire day and be just as fresh when it ends as when you started.
4. Do more tasks than you would normally, because movement will generate body heat. I never let myself get breathing too hard though as that may necessitate sitting down, which means starting all over again. A slow, deliberate pace works best.
5. Following tips 1-4 and wearing clothing layers, especially clothing that is polyurethane foam insulated, will help you prevent frostbite.

6. Always listen and take notice of your body's reactions. When you start to shiver, immediately speed up your activity, do something in order to make yourself warm before uncontrollable shaking and numbness sets in. And if you elect to go sit in front of a fire, REMEMBER to take off the outer layers of clothing so the heat can get to you. When I was camping in [Korea](#) one winter several people came real close to freezing to death right in front of a blazing fire.

Take note that hypothermia occurs mostly in windy and wet weather with the temperature ranging from "30-50 degrees F".

7. Eat a lot of complex carbohydrates and you really should avoid food rich in sugar and starches. Diabetics MUST have their kits handy and be not quick to GUESS which way you are headed. Your results can be bouncing all over the chart as your body tries to compensate to a new set of physical demands upon it. Take a fresh battery along for the kit too.

## Fall camping

Fall camping is catching on among family campers. The beauty of nature during the fall season is indeed captivating if you catch it just right. The good news is that you can catch it just right by going to where nature is making its most extravagant changes when you can go.

With lesser crowds and fewer insects to bother you, fall camping can be the perfect option for your family.

However, during fall, some essential camping amenities such as showers and washrooms might not be offered. On the other hand, if you talk your whole church into going with you for a weekend the fun can be downright exhilarating AND the facility will go out of its way to open up the bathrooms and showers for you.

Single family trips can settle on remote fall camping sites. Pack your warm clothes then enjoy the "autumn months". While you are packing take care to be prepared for sudden weather changes too. A sudden snowstorm could be a disaster without preparation, and can be the icing on the cake if you are prepared for it.



## Spring camping

Spring is the season of transition; snow is now melting away and it is time to go back outdoors and get reacquainted with nature after that cold and long winter. Again, if you find yourself missing out on the wonderful season in your own area, look elsewhere to find that season in full bloom.

So what is there to do during spring camping? Anglers are eager to go fishing because the "small mouth bass" and the walleye are both spawning; Maybe ducks are now coming back into season in your area and you can go hunting. One game I like to play when I can use the kids for an excuse is seeing how close I can sneak up on wild game before it sees me. There's one guy up in Alaska that does so well at this that the animals drag him in for fun and games just like he was one of them.

Hike, swim, go canoeing, fishing, boating -- and if you have [any talent at all](#), do not forget to bring your paint brushes and camera as well because you will see more exciting sights than you can ever take advantage of.

Likewise, you can set up a barbeque outside, of course far away from your tent and enjoy hearty grilled snacks and meals such as hotdogs, burgers, steaks, fish -- fresh from the river, vegetables and salads.

Every season offers many different and exciting challenges unique to it: Summer, Winter, Fall, and Spring.

Remember, whatever the season, while you are camping, you are dealing and living with the wild. Learn and apply your "basic survival" knowledge when the situation calls for it; stay alert and be prepared always.



Three seasons a year the best way to get the family there is on bikes. It's slower than motorized, slow enough so that you see almost as much along the way as if you were walking. But leave the odometers at home; you are on vacation, remember?



An essential piece of equipment, your outdoor camping experience is largely dependent on the quality of your tent. Which is why there is a huge quantity to choose from. Remember, it will be your home for a few days. Having the right tent will keep you comfortable and warm especially on rainy and cold nights. The first and simplest way so as narrow your tent choices is to decide the tent dimension that you require.

Almost all tents are labeled with description and their capacity which indicates how many individuals the tent can hold comfortably. Tents are constructed to house a specific number of individuals. A solo backpacker will be looking for a tent that is much smaller than a family of campers that require a roomier tent.

Unless you are intent on having a collection of tents in different capacity or sizes, it is wise that you establish the largest number of individuals you believe will sleep in the tent and just buy the biggest tent you will need.

If you normally backpack with a companion but this summer you are going solo, then it is wise to purchase a "two-person" tent.

Basically, there are four tent components: namely the poles, tent body, rain fly and the tarp which is some kind of footprint or ground cloth to extend your tent's floor life. Apart from these basic components, here are some guidelines in choosing the best tent for you:

1. Consider your needs. Know your particular camping requirements, such as where do you mostly go camping, at what season and would you be backpacking? And how many are you. These answers can give you a clear idea of what type of tent you will need.
2. Set your budget. When you allocate a budget before you go looking for a tent, most likely, you will not overspend.
3. Tent weight and size. How many individuals will be sleeping in the tent? The size of your tent will not really matter should you go "car camping"; however, if your intention is backpacking, then consider a "light-weight" tent.
4. Tent features. Today, there tent manufacturers offering a lot of features for their tents.

Mesh panels allow the breeze go in your tent at the same time keep the mosquitoes and bugs out, "shock-corded" tent poles allow speedy setup, waterproof and flame resistant for safety, a rain fly for added rain protection, etc.

Make certain you choose the tent that best caters to all your basic requirements.

5. Make certain that you select a durable fabric tent. It will cost you more money, however this is definitely an area worth it.
6. Select the proper tent color. Inspect how the color of the tent transmits light well into the interior. Certain colors generate a brighter interior, whereas others create a cave-like and dreary ambience.

Take note that light colors are best for summer camping since they tend to be cooler whereas dark colors are able to absorb solar energy so that they are great when camping in cold weather.

7. Check the tent's coating. Remember that you must see a waterproof and shiny coating inside the floor and rain fly. If this is not visible or you can not feel this on the tent's fabric, than it is not thick enough to withstand heavy use.
8. Know that your tent needs when camping in the summer are very much different compared to camping in the snow.

Almost all tents available on the market have weather ratings. Make sure that you purchase a tent specifically made for a particular weather condition or season that you will be out camping.

9. Tent manufacturers. Various tent manufacturers have their unique design and name. Some are identified to make inexpensive tents, while others are well recognized to make high quality but expensive tents.

Popular tent makers are Coleman, Wenger, Eddie Bauer and Greatland Tents. Choose a tent manufacturer that has been trusted for years.

While in the forest or wilderness the wrong camping equipment may not kill you, it can send you packing off to a motel and cause you to regret having planned a family campout.

For that well-planned and enjoyable camping vacation, take your time when you purchase your tent.

## **Three Tips to Choosing the Right Camping Backpack**

“It’s just a bag” That’s what most inexperienced campers say. Unknown to them, the choice of bag is no trivial matter as any serious camper will testify. You will never appreciate how a good backpack can benefit your trek until you try going on a major one using an ill-fitting pack.

Take for example the experience of a trekker who went on a trip to the Appalachians in 1994. Instead of an exhilarating camp experience, he had to go home broken and bleeding from the weight of an ill-fitting pack damaging his hips. A decade later – with him a lot wiser and experienced – this hiker, accompanied by a better fitting pack, made 960 miles of terrain – a much greater experience than having your trip cut short due to terrible equipment.

Now you know how important a good pack is, here are a few tips to help you choose a good pack for the journey that lies ahead:

1. Know what you need – hikers and campers vary sharply in camping preferences, some are very minimalist in nature and take only the bare essentials. Others take a lot more equipment on their trips. The amount and type of equipment you bring will definitely shape the decision you make towards what backpack you will need.

You can then do some simple computation on your space needs. Most capable sales representatives can give you the amount of space their bags offer. When doing this try using the measurement for the amount of equipment you take for the longest trip you expect to go on.

2. Is it comfortable – this is probably the most important consideration when choosing a backpack. The goal of every good camping bag is to help campers carry the most amount of weight with the least amount of effort – and inconvenience for that matter.

Good packs distribute weight efficiently, allowing you maximum comfort when carrying the pack. To know how well a pack does this, you will have to test the pack itself. Most camp stores will have sand weights to place in the pack so that you can test how the pack holds up to the weight. You will have to carefully consider how comfortable these packs are before even considering them for purchase.

A rule of thumb to remember is that the shoulder straps should carry about 30% of the weight, while the hips – being a lot more stable should carry about 70% of the weight. When testing the pack, make sure the shoulder straps are not uncomfortable or restrictive. Try moving around in them to see how much mobility the backpack gives you.

Most packs also have a sternum strap. These straps help stabilize the backpack. Sternum straps should be positioned below the collarbone to ensure comfort and stability.

The hip belts on the other hand should not constrict your breathing, nor should they be too thick that they reduce your mobility.

Designs always vary and backpack companies are always heralding a 'new and improved' technology for campers to try out. The only way to really know if these new bags work is for you to try them out

3. Choose your frame – there are two types of frames to choose from – internal and external. Internal frames are slimmer and hug your body closer, making them ideal for hard trails since they are so maneuverable and do not restrain mobility. They are a bit harder to load though. External framed backpacks are great for beginners on easy trails since they are easier to pack. However, they are a bit stiffer and may restrict mobility. It's the best type of backpack for children and beginners though.

4. Extras – when purchasing backpacks consider whether the pack is compatible with weather sheets to protect your pack against the elements. Also consider how attachments can be adapted for your pack. Most packs have rings and snap-on pieces that allow for accessories to integrate with your pack.

In the end, a good pack is almost synonymous with a great trek. Choosing a good pack will definitely enhance your camping experience tenfold. Choose carefully, since your backpack will probably be your most trusted companion on all of your camping trips.

# **Sleep with Comfort Even on the Road**

## **– A Camper's Guide to Sleeping Bags**

The hardest thing about going on camping trips is getting a good night's sleep. Being out in the woods on the trail will certainly expose you to nature's worst. While you shelter yourself against the elements with a good tent, only a proper sleeping bag will help give you a good night's rest to power you up for the next day of activities.

While finding a "be all and cure-all" sleeping bag is virtually impossible, it is however, possible to find a bag that will keep you comfortable for most trips – if not all.

When choosing a sleeping bag, take careful note of your needs. You will have to cater your choice of sleeping bags to the trips you most often make. Also, careful knowledge of the available types of sleeping bags will help you make a good decision regarding a sleeping bag.

The greatest issue when choosing a sleeping bag is whether to purchase a down or synthetic fill sleeping bag. Nothing provides comfort and warmth like down, and down is generally recommended for most outdoor camping trips with the family. However, in the event that it rains and your down-filled sleeping bags get wet, it is going to take forever to get your sleeping bags dry. Synthetic fill bags, on the other hand, give good warmth and dry quickly if ever they get wet. They are a bit heavier in comparison, though.

If your needs revolve around general purpose camping trips, you will want to purchase a three-season sleeping bag. These bags generally have a temperature-comfort rating of 10 to 20 degrees Fahrenheit. If you are a more specialized camper – for instance if you like going camping on specific seasons – you will want to purchase a bag that caters to that season. If you like camping during the cooler seasons, go for sleeping bags that offer more warmth – and if you need a bag for warmer climates, go for breathable bags that keep you cool even during the hot seasons.

Check the bag before purchasing, they will usually have a temperature rating guide so that you can choose the bag suited to your needs. Most winter sleeping gear should be rated for minus 15 to 40 Fahrenheit, while summer sleeping bags should hold up to the 10 to 20 degree Fahrenheit rating.

Here are few things you should look for in a good sleeping bag

1. Material – Most sleeping bags will be made of nylon, or polyester. These are the best kinds of material for sleeping bags. If you are a serious backpacker, try to avoid cotton material – especially the printed ones. If you are taking kids along, you will probably have to concede this point.

For added comfort while sleeping, look for bags that have a lining of taffeta or other non-cotton material. These materials, in comparison to plain nylon or even some cotton lining, are more comfortable, breathe better, and warm quicker.

2. Shape – The mummy shaped sleeping bag is pretty popular nowadays, however, some people find them constricting, especially those that want a lot of space to wiggle around in while sleeping. Mummy shaped bags tend to be snug and comfortable for some people, plus they warm quicker. Rectangular and semi-rectangular bags are great if you want a larger space to sleep in.

3. Accessories and zippers – Make sure the zippers are double-sided and allows for opening on both ends without any hassle. You may want to look out for zipper hooks as well, which prevent the bags from inadvertently opening up accidentally. Also look for insulated draft collars that help seal in the heat around the shoulders and around the neck.

Plus, dark colored bags are advisable since they absorb more heat and are easier to dry out than their lighter colored counterparts.

While all these tips come in handy, you may still want to test the bag itself to see if it fits your lifestyle. Some stores will allow you to test their products before selling them to you. If this is the case, don't hesitate to jump into a bag to try it out.

With a good sleeping bag, you can look forward to more comfortable nights on your camping trips.



## Dressing for the weather

Bad clothing decisions on your camping trip can spell doom for any 'happy family' camping trip. Just because we all enjoy typically comfortable weather where we live, we can afford to wear pretty much anything we want. However, when venturing into nature for camping trips and treks, everyday wear won't be enough to protect you or keep you comfortable. Nature isn't really known to take it easy on those that venture into its extremes.

So for an assuredly enjoyable camping trip, you will want to be fully clothed against the elements. Over the years advances in clothing technology has spawned a lot of camping wear designed to help keep the elements at bay on your camping trips. However, with the glut of clothing choices, it can get a little confusing to find out which clothing best fits your needs.

Here's a rundown of the stuff you can find off the rack at stores to keep you comfy during your expeditions and the technologies behind them. Knowing their characteristics will help you find out how these technologies can benefit your outdoor life.

### The Materials

The most popular materials for camping wear include technologies that allow water to escape the material, but don't allow any water in. Ever since man started intentionally developing materials for the comfort of campers and trekker alike, the biggest problem they had to face was how to somehow draw moisture away from the surface of the skin so that the camper did not have to wear wet soggy shirts that made for bad temperature control. The new clothing had to accomplish this while keeping moisture out – it had to have some waterproof properties.

In response to this need, developers have unveiled three breakthrough technologies in the field of outdoor and sports apparel – microporous laminates, microporous coatings, and monolithic membranes. All these materials somehow allow water vapor to escape while preventing moisture from settling on the skin. The monolithic technology is particularly interesting since it absorbs water vapor into itself while using body heat to dissipate the vapor. The harder you work, the more heat you make, and the more vapor is dissipated making for an interesting bit of technology.

You may want to check garments nowadays for this or similar technology. This technology helps keep you dry and comfortable, and makes maintaining a good temperature easier – especially in unforgiving cold climes.

## **Nylon or Polyester?**

Nylon has typically been the more popular of the materials used for outdoor wear. This is because it is scratch resistant and can endure the wear and tear of most outdoor activities, plus it is light and breathable. However, polyester, not to be outdone, has steadily become an acceptable compliment or alternative to nylon since it keeps the wearer warmer and absorbs less water than nylon. Look for the new breed of materials – keep with nylon to be safe, the newer polyester kinds do well too.

### Keeping you warm

One of the critical needs of people outdoors is apparel that will keep them warm in extreme weather. As mentioned above nylon or polyester coupled with the newer micropore technology does a good job at helping a person stay warm and comfy. However, in more abject frigid weather, you will need extra material to keep you warm.

The greatest issue when choosing camping wear is whether to purchase down or synthetic fill material. Nothing provides comfort and warmth like down, and down is generally recommended for most outdoor camping trips with the family. However, in the event that it rains and your down-filled clothes get wet, it is going to take forever to get them dry. Synthetic fill clothes, on the other hand, give good warmth and dries quickly if ever they get wet. They are a bit heavier in comparison, though.

Fleece is a good in-between solution for your garments. Contrary to intuition, fleece still keeps one warm even when it is damp. It also keeps moisture away from the skin, keeping one dry and comfortable. Plus they are squishy and comfortable to the feel.

When looking for good camping wear, remember that the above mentioned technologies are very helpful in keeping you comfortable throughout camping trips. Look at each alternative and find out how their advantages fit in with your personal camping needs.

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## Campfires and setting up camp

Building a good fire for your camping trip isn't just a fancy party trick to impress your fellow campers. I remember being on a church work project with fifteen men one time to cut a winter's supply of firewood for a widow. About three hours into the project it turned spit-curdling cold. It was numbing to hear the answer coming from each man there to the question: "Do you have a match?" A lighter, anything? We were some pretty sick looking boys when we came in out of the cold. I was even sicker when someone asked me, "**Didn't you have a lighter in the car?"** At least one vehicle out there should have had a lighter. One little spark and we could have all had a roaring fire.



Knowing how to build a proper camp fire can spell the difference between life and death in extreme circumstances. In the older, simpler, and less complicated days, when matches and gas torches were only luxuries, building a proper camp fire was essential to any outdoor activity. This was where everyone sought warmth against the cold environs, and where people found the means to cook a warm dinner for everyone. Night temperatures can be very unforgiving, and camp fires provided a means for everyone to gather around and warm up.

During the French and Indian War [Ben Franklin](#) noted that the natives would build their private fires in a hole and lower their feet over the warm coals to keep their whole bodies warm while the colonists would freeze to death with a fire three times the size. Especially if you have fleece to lie back on and cover up with this still works wonders. I remember one time camping out with a great hunter. He went to great pains to drag up an ironwood tree and get it to blazing, then he put a pad on the ground and a mattress over that, then slept inside a sleeping bag. His eyes nearly started out of his head when (twenty feet from his fire) I trenched out a place to lie down, put a stone up for pillow, turned my feet to his fire and went to sleep. He was even more astonished to find me still alive the next morning. My rest was complete, but I didn't turn his bacon and eggs down though. That man could cook and it was one of those times I was out in the desert with nothing on me save what had been in my pockets.

Aside from the heat, camp fires will also keep the larger wild animals at bay. Wild dogs, lions and other beasts are not keen to approach a campfire. That is why camp fires are always left burning well into the night.

While the art of making campfires has been all but forgotten – partly because matches have begun to seem more convenient – campfire making as a skill is still relevant and essential to any camper’s repertoire of tricks.

First of all, the secret to starting camp fires is to start them quickly. You can only do this if you have a firm grasp of what is needed to start a fire – heat, oxygen, and fuel.

Oxygen, while around us, is not always readily available to the campfire, you may have to arrange the fuel in such a way that it has an adequate air supply. You may also supplement this supply by blowing into a cinder, or fanning an already blossoming flame.

Heat is usually generated for campfires by friction. You will probably use an assortment of methods to generate this heat – rubbing two sticks together, using flint stones and wads of cotton, and other techniques. However, this won’t give you a glorious fan of flames if you don’t have the right fuel.

Fuel is what keeps your fire burning, and finding the right type of fuel is integral to your efforts at building and maintaining a fire. Building a fire by applying the heat to the logs isn’t going to work. You will need tinder. Tinder is easily combustible materials that will burn quickly and hopefully emit enough heat and gases to start a fire with larger pieces of wood.

Ideal tinder includes dry sticks, bark, dry leaves, and twigs. Just two weeks ago I watched a crew working hard to manufacture kindling from frozen oak firewood when the whole forest was a foot deep in dry leaves.

**I carry a lighter now!** In a matter of seconds I had scooped some leaves up into a pile where I wanted the fire. Next I scooped out a shallow indenture, near the bottom, and inserted the flame. The fire crackled up hotter than a firecracker and I eased a tree limb into position, with another one beside it and one on top of them. These I covered with more dry leaves as the flames continued to grow. I really didn't care if the limbs burned or not, but they readily caught fire and the seasoned campers came to borrow one to get their fire going good. They had not learned a thing.

Seasoned campers will work up a sweat chewing kindling out of a log even when there is a multitude of twigs readily available. Then most of them will end up using kerosene to get the fire going great blazes. Like I said, I'll use dry leaves any old time. Next, I prefer small twigs. If kindling (of their size) is already available I will (if it is available) take a nugget of self-starting charcoal out of the barbecue bag and light it. What a merry fire I have blazing quite quickly. One trick I love to pull on Euromerican campers after their fire is blazing is to put popcorn on their coals, unseen. Then I retire for five or six minutes while for the kernels to begin popping.

**"I've never seen a knot pop like that before!"** Hidden in the shadows I don't even have to keep a straight face. It has been so long since I was near the fire that no one ever suspects me as the cause.

Kindling can be used to start the fire and to help maintain it. But remember that you can only successfully build a Euroamerican fire if the larger, harder-to-burn pieces of wood are made to burn too. My grandfather always said that "Fire loves company. Two sticks side by side will keep burning whereas one stick will freeze to death." The more sticks you have in the fire, the better your fire will burn. The principle works even better with logs.

### **Some common designs of campfires include:**

Tepee – tepees are great for quick fires, and last long into the night. It makes use of a lot of tinder, so you will need a good bunch of it. The longer burning wood is placed, balanced against each other vertically around the tinder. This makes sure that the heat and the gases of the tinder are generated in a way to help the larger pieces of wood to burn. It is the perfect fire for boiling water and general purpose campfires. Incidentally, it is the gases that burn, not the wood. That's why green wood can make a hotter fire than cured wood, IF you get it hot enough.

Pyramid – You build a 'pyramid' of logs by laying the logs horizontally on the ground together, then building another layer on top of the next gradually forming a pyramid. Although this type of campfire is a little hard to start up, the advantage of such is that it generates a lot of charcoal that will be useful in the future. It burn pretty well and is quite a stable fire.

Parallel – The parallel fire puts the tinder in between two logs. This is an efficient burning fire since the insides of the log burn too – having the fire and heat going in a good, snug place between two logs.

Star (Indian) – This is the type of fire you usually see on those old Western movies. The logs are laid out like spokes of a wheel. Tinder is placed in the middle. The fire is easy to maintain, although you do have to push each 'spoke' of the wheel towards the middle as the fuel burns up.

There are other types of campfires, all with specific purposes. But as with any outdoor skill, creating and maintaining any of them takes a lot of practice to get right. And like mothers usually tell their kids, don't play with fire. Treat it with respect as it has the power to save and to destroy. Remember to follow safety precautions after using a fire – douse the fire with water or bury the remains of a campfire with dust and dirt. Fires left unattended may cause serious property damage, so always take precautions that nothing that shouldn't burn gets burned.

## General food basics

### Camping food need not be just about junk foods

When camping, it helps to think light and carry light. However, no matter how pretty the image is of a camp fire with eggs and tasty bacon sizzling in the background, plus hot coffee, reality bites; Reality is heavy.

In order to make this food camping image real someone has to carry all the cooking equipment needed such as a cast iron pan, a cooler, as well as ice to keep food fresh, etc. "Don't forget the can opener!"

The usual options therefore are frozen and dried meals which basically cost more does not taste like anything at all and are heavy on preservatives and artificial flavors.

Believe it or not, there are a lot better options out there, right at the grocery store nearest you, which provides healthier if not a lot tastier food options. And we are not talking just instant noodles either. Cereal like Cheerios is one good option, for example. Dried fruits like raisins are also a better and healthier option. Cranberries that are dried are another, as are those delicious blueberries. Now, if you ever do want to travel as light as I do, one little handful of real wheat (I'm talking actual berries here, not flour) can keep you going for three or four days.

The following are tips to choose the camping food that is right for you.

### Weigh in, weigh out

Camping requires a lot of energy walking and traversing trails and trees. So any stuff carried during this time must – as much as possible – be light in weight or at least tolerably heavy. This is because besides food, clothes also need to be packed, a sleeping bag, a system for purifying water, a mattress, and so on.

The cooking system used most during camping trips are stoves that involve micro cooking. This is composed of a burner primarily used to boil water. Usually any nourishment a camper would consider consuming is food that is the dehydrated kind. Also, there are packaged cereals that all you need to add is hot water so you can enjoy a warm meal. Oatmeal is one of them, also cream of wheat. It is best that these type of meals be placed in a bag, preferably a Ziploc bag so you can appropriately portion the quantity you would be taking and eating. This is lighter to carry and better this than bringing an entire package of oatmeal.

For drinks, good old powdered orange juice like Tang is readily accessible and easy to carry as well. Instant Postum could also be brought on a camping trip. The red label jar tastes like coffee, the blue label is better.

Another good thing with this type of camping food is that there is less trash left behind.

In the main, crackers carry better and last longer than breads do. Bread will pick up moisture in the Sahara desert. If hot bread is a necessity in your life take along a premixed quantity in a plastic sandwich bag. At the proper moment add water and mix it right in the package and pour it out on a hot stone, or into a hot skillet.

During camping, compared to bread, crackers are a better option because they stale a lot less and fill the tummy too. Plus they are light and handy. A good cracker brand is Wasa. However, if you want cheese with your crackers, choose those that do not need to be refrigerated. There are available ones in the grocery. Or if you want to be tastily creative, there is always easily-packed pepperoni and salami.

Peanut butter could also be placed in portable tubes. Chocolate could also easily be packed and is extremely tasty and emotionally filling especially during that difficult top climb.

However, if you prefer to experience a little of the luxury in the real world to your camping climb, - and do not mind to carry some heavy stuff - pack in a can of liver pate', chicken chunks, ham, or tuna.

Prior to camping, make sure that you know just how many days or weeks you will be out. This helps you prepare the meals AND THE VARIETY that you need to take during your trip. To get the most nourishment without feeling too heavy after having eaten during camping, calculate the quantity of snacks you could take in. Usually carbohydrate rich foods do not have a lot of moisture and so are a good choice.

Also, to avoid a monotony of the same meals during camping, it is best that you schedule or designate different types of food at each meal. Dried fruit for breakfast and oatmeal for lunch are good choices. Cookies in between is not bad either.

All in all, camp food is just like regular food -- minus the usual amenities. It could taste good and be healthy too if you know where to look.

Here is yet another free book that will help you [pack great snacks](#).

## Great Camping Activities

A lot of people come down hard on electronic games. As long as they are in your restricted care I personally don't see a thing wrong with them being made available to children at judicious moments, like when you are too exhausted to watch them. Never, ever will I let a child be playing an electronic game while moving through the wilderness. #1, they are out there to enjoy nature. #2, nature has a way of sneaking up to bite at the worst possible time. #3, watching where they put their feet can keep legs from breaking and ankles from turning.



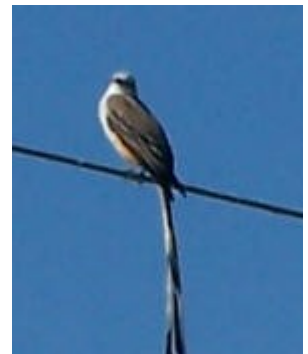
Never overlook the opportunities to visit a Nature Center put up by the State. Do this BEFORE going into the area and your children will observe more, learn more, and enjoy it thoroughly. Many times you'll find hands-on learning going on just as soon as YOU express an interest.

[Telling stories](#) is the age-old device used by our ancestors - and even us - to battle away boredom. This free book will take the LOST part out of the lost art and help you become a master story teller.

What did you think was the purpose of all those cave [drawings](#) over in France? Story-telling is an ingenious way to keep kids occupied. An idle mind is a nest of anxiousness and tangled tantrums. Keeping their minds creatively occupied through stories will get their brain cells processing.

Plus, the best thing about this activity is it is free and could be done anytime and anywhere. Another great activity is [bird watching](#).. Watching, identifying, feeding, rearing birds can become one of your children's lifetime hobby and sport.

Take along a bird book for identification purposes, and also study up in advance to discover what kind of birds you are likely to [see in the area](#) at this time of year.



## **Watch those clouds pass**

Watching birds, sooner or later you will notice the clouds. Watching clouds lets you relax and unwind. This is one way to unreel and be less uptight about anything. Chilling out has never felt this good.

Spread some towels on the grass or a blanket that is old and not that regularly used. Lie on your back and observe the variety of clouds that pass by. You may help your children see an elephant, a rabbit or a dog. After that they will be the ones showing you. Or you could simply count the number of clouds that pass. This is a relaxing activity that is also just as fun. Try it out.

## **Bubbles, bubbles, bubbles**

When outdoors, do not forget to bring your bubble maker device or toy and let everyone, especially kids, bubble their way to fun. This is an effective way to run around and laugh as bubbles pop and float around.

Board games, dice and play

In case you get rained on, do not fret. If you have brought your trusty old dice and any easy-to-carry board game with you, playing will be just as easy as one two three and its fun too.

The game Yahtzee is one example. Card games are also easy and convenient games to bring. It fits one pocket's easily and can bring loads of entertainment and games. Even magic tricks, if you know a few ones using cards.

Here is one more free book to help you keep [young minds working](#)..

Write your way out of boredom

Try bringing a journal and write your heart out. This could include a log of the activities that you have done all through the camping trip. They may be fun and educational later on.

Study up

When in a new place, it might help if you study the area's history. Where did Slap Out get its name? Well, this old codger started up a store, but he ended up eating his own victuals. When customers arrived and asked for something special he would look around the shelves and say, "No, I'm slap out of that." What a wonderful way to tell your kids the background of the area you are at. It may also be a nice story to tell around camp fires.

## Sing some songs

Really! Do not think of it as cheesy - it may be an effective boredom buster. Songs around the camp fire is a good activity to keep everyone entertained. Make up a song. Or play a game by letting others guess the song you are humming. Use nature's instruments. Twigs may be used as drum sticks. Dance also. It does not cost a thing. It may also be a form of good exercise.

All in all, the limits of activities rest on how much you want your mind to explore. The sky's the limit may also mean, your mind is its own limit. Do not be afraid to try something everyone would enjoy and have fun doing. Be creative. You may also bring toys such as balls. Frisbees are also a fun thing to play with especially when camping in the wild outdoors. Just remember to always have fun.



Playing around with Mother Nature is the greatest way on earth to have fun, but they don't call this river "The Bone Crusher" for nothing. You need to Play it Safe – You need to Pack a First Aid Kit.

Camping requires a significant amount of time away from civilization and a lot of active time walking, trailing and enjoying all the glory of the great old outdoors life style. That can be dangerous, especially if you aren't ready.

The following are a few tips and advice to pack that vital first aid kit when out camping.

**First thing first, take lessons. If your church has a Boy Scout unit, ask the Scoutmaster to let you sit in for a refresher course. Take a Boy Scout Manual with you when you go. There are a lot of other classes available that provide first aid lessons. Check your local community. Basic first aid lessons are generally inexpensive yet valuable once learned. Once such knowledge is acquired the training allows you to provide immediate care to an individual who is injured or sick. There is a basic EMT or emergency medical technician course that one could take. However, for those who do not have much time, short lessons are available. The American Red Cross provides such courses.**



**Be sure to bring enough water!**

Children should also be given basic first aid information. When camping with children, it definitely would not hurt if they are introduced to the first aid kit. Show kids the items inside the first aid kit, its purpose and when the probable time it might be needed.

Older kids may profit from being shown certain situations wherein they could get hurt and what action you should take when such a situation occurs. A child who knows or has a basic idea of first aid will panic less once an injury or a slight emergency situation occurs.

## First aid kit: what to pack and how



To better understand your first aid kit, do not forget to bring in a manual. The American Red Cross provides a good one. Also, a small Swiss Army Knife is a very useful tool to have on a camping trip. An emergency blanket should be brought as well. Be aware that a blanket made of wool could get wet and after which may smell bad and take forever to dry. There are emergency blankets that are light weight and are easily packed.

A razor blade is great for removing splinters. Another tool to bring on a camping trip is a magnifying glass. In addition to finding pesky slivers a magnifying glass can be effective for starting fires on a sunny day.

Another handy and useful item to bring is a mirror. Mirrors are useful especially when signaling for help. I also carry a very sharp and loud whistle in my kit.

A thermometer is another item that could be brought on a camping trip.

A cold pack can be included to prevent any exhaustion that is caused by heat. It could also be used to treat away burns, sprains, bruises, swelling, toothaches and headaches.

A water packet – the sterilized kind – usually containing about four ounces of water is an efficient and useful item used for water drinking and cleaning a wound. Fortunately, this item has a shelf life of five years.

For wounds, a medical tape should also be brought in. Also, try to pack in threads and a needle. Gloves, safety pin, scissors, eye dressing, band aid as well as a wrap bandage that is elastic.

For any injuries involving the shoulder or arms, a triangular bandage should also be brought along. Gauze pads (a good supply) should also be brought as well as a bandage that is large and compressed.

A wrap gauze should also be available when camping, wipes that are antiseptic, a lip balm (to protect the lips from the sun), and Neosporin (for kids with small wounds).

Meanwhile, for adults, a pain reliever like Tylenol should also be available. For children, a non-aspirin tablet should be available. Decongestants like Dimetapp are a good medicine to bring. Antihistamines are a great option for adults.

For a hot camping trip, do not forget to pack in a salt tablet. One more thing before I leave the subject of first aid.. That's [the sassafras tree](#). If you ever get near one, pluck off a potful of the leaves. Click the link above for directions how to use them, and why, and how to carry it with you.

All in all, camping is fun if you are prepared for all the activities and experiences the outdoors will bring.

## **Staying in Touch**

Keep in touch even when camping out

How should you do just that when you are outdoors and away from all the amenities and convenience of civilization?

Easy, there are various ways and means as well as gear that is available to cater to a camper's every need.

The following are tips and advice to make keeping in touch during camping as easy as a-b-c.

Set boundaries and follow them

Camping, especially if there are kids around, could be quite a complicated activity. To make it less complex and safe, try to set some boundaries in and around the campsite. Advise campers, especially kid campers, what are the things they should do and not do with or without an adult. Usually, an effective method is requiring kids to always be with a buddy. This could be an assigned partner where one could check in on each other on where the other's location is, or update the rest of the group of any location changes.

Familiarize yourself with the surroundings

Once you arrive in the camp, make sure that you and the campers immediately familiarize yourself with the surroundings. Try to take note of any noticeable landmarks that are around. A large tree perhaps, yet make sure these landmarks are locatable in relation to the campsite.

Whistle, whistle, whistle

Equip each camper, especially children, with their very own whistle. Establish a code for specific situations that everyone could easily follow and heed. For example, a whistle blown two times could be established to mean "help." Whistles that are blown three times could mean "I am here."

Color your world

Or at least, have campers carry trash bags that are colored brightly. If you ever get lost, these bags could be used as a device to signal to the others your location. Also, the bags could be used during an emergency like when it is cold outside and they need temporary shelter. Simply cut a slit at the bag's top and have it pull through the head. Believe it or not, this plastic bag could serve as an effective albeit temporary protection that could keep a kid camper alive through the night.

Choose a camp that provides high-tech communication

Believe it or not, there are camp sites that provide campers the same amenities one would usually find in civilization. Email facilities, fax as well as phone equipment are available in a New Zealand camp site called Old Macdonalds. That is if you prefer to surf the internet while enjoying the comfort and glory of the natural outdoors.

This type of camp is perfect for those who might want to be in touch with their business or personal affairs while at the camping grounds. This type of camp strikes a balance between the rugged outdoors and the comfort and convenience of modern technology.

Make use of high-tech communication gear

If you really want to stay connected, utilize modern technology through the following gear:

Hand-held radios. This equipment is very handy now-a-days and so could be easily transportable anywhere and anytime campers need to communicate with each other. Currently though, such an equipment is also used not just in camping but also by families that are out shopping or attending a large sports event.

Laser Range finders are now just as handy as radios. Though they were once large and difficult to actually use, today's finders are light, user-friendly and extremely accurate. Believe it or not, these laser range finders are also used in golfing.

Global positioning system. Currently, units that have gps are used by the military and units involved in search and rescue operations. Though these equipments have features that are high-tech, they are still easy to operate and very user friendly.

Night vision goggles. The movies are not the only place this equipment could be seen and used. These devices are now readily available. Though

these are sophisticated, they are very easy to use, light weight and are compact and handy.

All in all, staying in touch while camping out may be a bit difficult if you have no idea how to go about it. To be able to avoid this, prepare the equipment, rules and stuff you need to go through beforehand. Camping should be fun. Ample preparation adds to enjoyment and lessens the stress.

### Getting There Can Be Fun - Keeping Kids Happy

Are we there yet? Are we there yet? Are we there yet? Helpful ways to make them stop with the annoyance!

Road trips are fun, during the first hour perhaps. After that everything goes downhill.

So how can road trips be fun beginning when the journey starts up until the destination? The following are tips and advice to help make road trips – especially if it involves kids – fun and happy.

#### Pack and prepare

As always, prevention is always better than cure. Packing and preparing prior to a long road trip must also include planning the activities the kids could do during the ride. Face it eight-hour drives are difficult for kids. It will not be much of a help if the stops you make are only at gas stations or during meal times. Keep your kids pre-occupied and entertained at least. They are your responsibility and it is you who are taking them for the ride.

Do not forget to pack in some snacks, hopefully some healthy ones, so kids have something to nibble on during the long ride.

#### Research, research and research

Get to know the road that you are to take prior to you going on the journey. This helps you make the necessary stops and recreational activities that kids may need to pack with them. Stopping at a park or a kids attraction is a good distraction for the long trip ahead.

Another helpful thing is that families must make sure to stay clear from the same old restaurant chains. Food must be special also and it would help if traditional hamburger joints are avoided in favor of specialized and decent road diners.

Depart really late or depart really early

A very looong road trip requires that departure time be in the late evening or early morning. Both options help avoid heavy traffic. Also, the kids are given the time to have some additional sleep, thus keeping them quiet along the road.

Stop in the name of love

According to a study, it is highly recommended that stops be made at least every hour or two. This allows your kids to have the necessary breaks. This also allows them to avoid carsickness.

Carsickness could best be avoided by walking around. Kids need to do this to keep their blood circulating during the long trip. Avoid giving motion sickness drugs to kids as it could keep them unnecessarily sedated.

Pack some handy board games

Games that are magnetized and could be easily transported anywhere could provide hours of fun. Also, books that have activities in them are good options also.

Believe it or not, there is a company that manufactures products and books that are focused on travel. Some of the activities found in these books are crossword puzzles. This is also a good way to make friends on a long journey.

Collect stuff and make them into a scrapbook

Try to encourage children to keep and collect little trinkets found during the journey. Stubs from tickets, brochures and postcards may be kept and be later put into a scrapbook.

Bring books and DVDs

Thankfully, DVDs have the uncanny ability to keep everyone occupied, at peace and in harmony with each other especially on long trips. Audio books are also a great way to keep kids listening and therefore quiet.

Chill out, sit back and relax. The saying, the journey is better than the destination has never rung so true. The memories of a road trip that is filled with activities and good memories are better than thinking of the stress of actually getting there. In the end, it is better to look back with fondness than with frustration.

## Involve kids in your travel plans

The trip will actually be best enjoyed by kids more than adults. So as much as possible, get kids to be involved in the planning. Allow them to look at the maps, show them the guidebooks. They would better appreciate the journey if you let them in on what they are getting themselves into. Who knows, they may even suggest helpful tips to make the journey more enjoyable. Never underestimate their wisdom.

All in all, a trip is best enjoyed if there is less control and if you just let go and allow things to positively flow.

## Destination Suggestions

Where to Go for Your Next Vacation? - Destination Suggestions (mountains, beaches, lakes, popular camping places)

Vacation time is probably the most awaited event of the year. Who would not want to finally have a break from the very hectic and stressful schedule most working people have year-round. Because a vacation is done very seldom, most people exert all efforts to make it as special as possible.

Now the great cause of confusion is choosing where to go. The choices are so enormous that looking for a good destination might be as stressful as work itself. But you need not worry, here are some great destination suggestions for your next vacation:

If you love the great outdoors and trekking mountains is your thing, then you might want to go to the Big Basin Redwoods State Park. Big Basin is the oldest state park in California and has been around since the year 1902. It is located just above the coastal town of Santa Cruz in Central California and is very well known for being the home of the ancient coastal redwoods, which are among the oldest existing living things on earth. The park comprises about 18,000 acres of chaparral, mixed conifer and oak trees. Big Basin is known for its dense forests surrounded by ferns canyons and hiking trails. The area is good for camping, backpacking, and trekking as well as bird watching. Wild animals thrive in the area and you could easily spot deer, raccoons and bob cats. There are plenty of waterfalls in Big Basin such as Berry Creek Falls, Golden Cascade Falls, and Silver Falls among many others. The climate can be sunny and warm especially in the ridge tops or foggy and damp in the areas near the ocean. It may take a long time to reach the park, but the trip is very much worth the wait.

If beaches are your thing, whether you want to bring your family or just go bask in the sun alone, Hilton Head Island is the place to go. This beautiful isle in South Carolina is composed of several beaches namely the Alder Lane Beach, Coligny Beach Park, Fish Haul Park, Driessen Beach Park, Burke's Beach, Folly Field Beach Park, and Islanders Beach Park. There are thousands of activities to do at Hilton Head. One can go watch the wild dolphins, bike all over the island, play a round of golf or a game of tennis. But if you would like to do the main thing – that is, swimming – the official swimming areas are at Islanders, Folly Field, Driessen, Coligny and Alder Beaches. Lifeguards are on duty during the beach going months. Vacationers usually come from the first of April to the end of September, the official beach season for Hilton Head Island.

If you do not like salty water but would still like to get wet, then you might want to go to a lake, and Branson, Missouri is the place to be. Branson prides itself of having three crystal clear lakes. Table Rock Lake has great water attractions like the Showboat Branson Belle that resembles a late 1800s paddlewheel boat. There is also the Branson's American Star, a dinner and sightseeing yacht that is perfect for both night and day cruises. If you really want to get wet, you might want to try White Water, a large outdoor water park that opens from May to September.

If camping is your game, then Ohiopyle State Park can be the right destination for you. It is located in the South Western mountains of Pennsylvania which is perfectly cool during summer and breathtaking during fall. Both hardcore and amateur campers can camp at Ohiopyle as there are provisions for both traditional and electric tents in different sites. This is a good place for animal sightings as mountain cats, white-tail deer, raccoons, and black bears live in the area. There are many fun activities to do at Ohiopyle. There are several hiking trails that are rich in breathtaking views of flora and fauna, lined with wild flowers like triulims. There are many bike trails as well for those who do not want to travel on foot, no need to bring bicycles as they can be rented in the nearby town for just about ten dollars. If you are more adventurous, you might want to try whitewater rafting. Rafts, kayaks, and other rafting equipment can be rented as well.

Vacation can really be fun if you are in a great destination. So go and try these destinations out and have a fantastic vacation!!! There are many activities in the outdoors that can keep kids entertained during a camping trip. Here are ten of them.

1. Get wet and go splashing. More likely, you would be able to find a nice swimming spot. Whether a big lake or a small brook, you are bound to locate a nice body of water to splash around and have wet fun. Swimming amidst nature can be so much more enjoyable than swimming in a man-

made pool. Just be sure that the swimming hole you find is safe for people, normally camping parks would tell you which ones are good for dips and which ones are not. Also, be careful about diving and never leave your kids swimming alone.

2. Bike together. Most camping sites have great bike trails. Riding bicycles is very fun when the view is great. It is faster and cooler than just traveling on foot. Make sure to bring a map and plan your trip so that you would not easily get lost. Do not ride too fast, or you might leave each other behind, anyway, you would not be able to enjoy the scenery if you speed.

3. Watch for birds and animals. Most camping sites and forest parks have primers and leaflets about the various animals thriving in their area. You may also bring books about wild animals and see if you could spot them. Try having a contest – the one who spots most kinds of animals wins. See the different animals that come out during the night and compare them to those that come out during the day. Just keep your children a safe distance away so that they will not disturb the animals.

4. Play games in the outdoors. It may be the classic sac race, tug-o-war, or just plain tag. Nothing beats the time-tested games when done in the woods. Just be sure to play games in a clear area to avoid accidents. Also, avoid creating so much noise so that you disturb the wildlife.

5. Organize a scavenger hunt. Kids love to go on quests and adventures. Scavenger hunts can be a great alternative to the role playing games kids play these days, not to mention that it is more physical, allowing your kids to exercise rather than just sit in front of the computer screen all day. Just warn your kids about the many prickly plants that could be lurking in the woods, such as poison ivy, oak and sumac.

6. Learn how to read maps and compasses. The great outdoors is a nice way to teach your children about navigation. Take out your map and compass while exploring the forest. Show your kids where you are on the map and show them where you are heading. This can also be done in conjunction with the scavenger hunt.

7. Light a campfire. Perhaps this is among the most awaited activities during camping. This can be the best way to end the day. Gather around the campfire to sing songs and tell stories (scary ones if you would like). Roast marshmallows and hotdogs. Play riddles and other word games.

8. Watch the stars. This is another night activity that can be both fun and educational. You may just simply lie on the ground and appreciate the free light show in the sky, or you may bring out a star chart and look for famous constellations and other heavenly bodies.

9. Look for shooting stars and make your wish.
10. Bathe in the rain. The weather can be unpredictable in many places, you cannot expect to have clear and sunny skies all the time. But do not pout if the rain does pour. You can have fun playing in the rain and enjoy mother earth's natural shower. Just be careful not to go out when there is thunder and lightning.
11. Just relax and simply enjoy the moment. You are in the outdoors for only a few times in a year (or even in a lifetime). Enjoy what nature has to offer. Avoid bringing any electronic gadget and simply bask in the quiet of the forest. This is the time to bond and enjoy each other's company.

There are hundreds of other activities to do outdoors, these are just a fraction of the many activities you can do with your kids on a camping trip. The point of it all is to enjoy spending the time together as a family.

## One more thing, **What About Fido?**

Camping is definitely a great way to spend one's vacation. The great outdoors is indeed a good venue to take time off from the hustling and bustling city with the fresh air and nice view that is a welcome replacement to your daily dose of smog and dust.

However, many people are hesitant about taking camping trips especially those who have pets. While pet hotels are now widely available, a lot of dog owners could not bear to be separated from their beloved canines even for just a few days.

One great idea to do is bring Fido along on the camping trip. Of course there are advantages as well as disadvantages with bringing your pet dog camping, it is therefore important to weigh the pros and cons carefully before deciding to take Fido along on your trip.

### The Pros of Taking Your Pet Dog Camping

Bringing your pet dog camping can be very exciting for both you and your canine friend. The outdoors can be very stimulating for an animal that has spent much of its time in a yard or a secluded doghouse. Your dog would greatly be excited to see, smell, and hear new things. The fresh air of the woods can be very advantageous to your dog's health. The camping site can also be a great venue for the dog to exercise since you are most likely going to do a lot of walks in the forest.

Bringing your pet dog along can also free you of worries and the anxiety of leaving him or her behind. This gives you peace of mind during a time

when you are supposed to be relaxing. While pet hotels have been really made to be safe for your pets, seeing your pet all the time is usually the best way to make sure they are safe and are being treated the way you want them to be.

When you bring your dog along, you can also do a lot of activities. You can take your dog on hunts for bugs and other small animals. You can play catch and fetch. Dogs can be great company for long walks. They can also help guard you from dangerous animals and nosy campers. Dogs are great protectors in the wild. A dog can even help you find your way back to your campsite in case you get lost.

### The Cons of Taking Your Pet Dog Camping

Taking your dog camping can indeed be fun, however it can also be a hassle. Dogs can get too excited in the outdoors. They can get rowdy and misbehave because of the new sights, sounds and smells that agitate them. Dogs may also be frightened by the wild animals they might encounter in the woods. Being introduced to a large space may also exhaust your dog especially if it is old.

Bringing your dog along may give you extra things to worry about. Dogs may get lost in the woods and it would really be stressful on your part if they do. You might constantly need to check on your dog, giving you extra tasks during a time when you are supposed to be relaxing. Your dog can also be extra noisy especially at night, disturbing your sleep and the quiet moments. Dogs may easily get into accidents outdoors as there are many hidden dangers that lurk in the forest. They might run into cliffs or get entangled in bushes. They may get attacked by wild animals or get bitten by snakes and rodents. They may even catch ticks that could cause Lyme disease.

Dogs may even restrict you from doing certain activities in the campsite. Some areas in national parks do not allow dogs and other pets and thus you might not be able to gain access to such areas if you bring your dog. Dogs may provoke wild animals and cause and you may be greatly bothered by them.

Taking your pet dog camping can have its merits and demerits. You have to carefully decide whether to bring your dog or not. If you do so, it is best to check with your dog's veterinarian to make sure that your best friend is fit for the outdoors.

The choice is up to you whether you should bring your dog camping. If you do decide to bring Fido along, enjoy the moment together, after all, your dog is your best friend!



For getting WAY out there a horse is the finest vehicle on earth. Now I'm not talking dude ranch chaperoned vacations. I'm talking about climbing into the saddle and heading into deep country. A good horse can take you into canyons that helicopters can't explore. I've seen palm trees in the

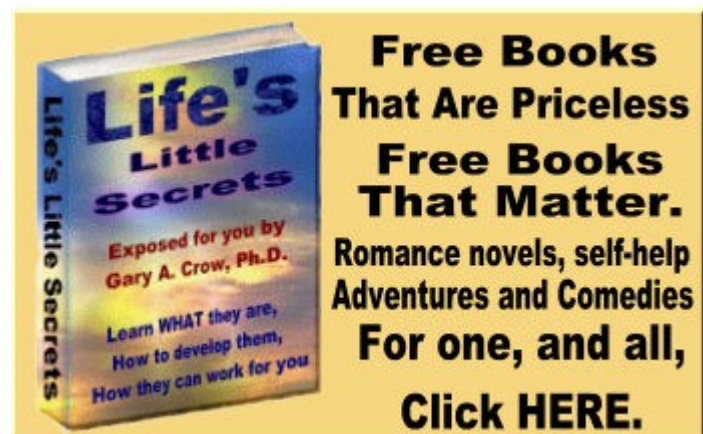
desert, I've seen caves run out in washes with burial pots still full, and I've camped in the middle of moaning ghosts in communities long dead, gone now, under water and a landslide of mud but marked on the map of my soul so I could dive right to them. You can find your own treasures from the back of a horse and if you're good enough to take care of yourself then taking your family along is not entirely out of the question. The less gear you need to take the more miles you can cover and the more fun you can have. The flowers you see, the animals that trust themselves to your view, will be all the more beautiful for yours being the only eye that on them lit this year.

Imagine showing your children waterfalls no other eye has seen, clouds so heavy with dripping snow they can't lift off the mountain cap. Where is land left with this rare legacy? Much of it can be found in famous places like Yellowstone, Tetons, the Black Hills, though it is disappearing fast, but some of the land out west is emptying too as progress calls man to commerce ports. And, all around the world there are clarion calls of nature so broad and wild as they were centuries ago. Destinations like Africa, Asia, Europe and South America offer a wonderful variety of adventure tours on horseback.

Though comparatively little known to Americans, the British and particularly the French have highly developed the riding tour concept in many parts of the world. In many locations in the United States rights-of-way for horses have been lost, but many still exist in other countries. This kind of vacation is not for everyone, but if your heart has missed a beat as you thought of mountains crunching into skies so blue they were black then you really do need to [explore this concept](#) more thoroughly.

The end

[Lin Stone](#)



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