

Enjoying the outdoors

What to know before going camping

Comedian Jim Gaffigan often jokes that camping is a tradition in his wife's family, but he's what people would consider "indoorsy." Gaffigan notes that the idea of burning a couple of vacation days sleeping on the ground outside isn't his idea of fun. But the comic may be in the minority.

Camping is one of the most popular outdoor recreational activities in North America. The statistics resource Statistica says the revenue of campgrounds and RV parks was estimated at \$5.8 billion in 2015.

More than \$2.5 billion was relegated to camping equipment spending. In Canada, National Park attendance is typically indicative of camping stays. Parks Canada said there was a 4 percent increase in overall visitation between 2009 and 2014.

Camping takes many forms. Some purists equate camping to minimalist survival — eking out an existence for a few days with nothing more than a tent, a single roll of toilet paper and a fishing pole.

Others enjoy the creature comforts of home and would readily consider camping something done from their climate controlled RV.

Camping ranges between sleeping under the open stars and glamping — a style of camping with amenities and potentially resort-style services. No matter how one defines camping, information is the key to becoming the proverbial "happy camper."

The following list is a general starting off point for planning a camping adventure.

NOT ALL CAMPSITES ARE EQUAL

When choosing a campsite, seek an area that offers the amenities you desire. Popular places like lakeside spots or

those close to trails tend to book up early. Also, consider proximity to bathrooms, showers and ingress/egress spots. People who desire solitude will pick different campsites than those who want to be near the family action.

CHOOSE A TENT FOR THE WEATHER

Supplies will differ depending on the temperatures when you plan to camp. Select a tent with a sun-protection sealant to prolong its longevity. Opt for a location with partial afternoon shade to keep the campsite and tent cool.

Face the tent door into the wind for a breeze (and also to keep mosquitoes from camping alongside you). Speak with a camping supply retailer about your camping needs.

BRING ALONG LOW-SALT, HIGH-PROTEIN SNACKS

Low-salt, high-protein snacks will keep you fueled for day trips along the trails without making you thirsty.

Dried berries and high-fiber trail mixes also can keep energy levels up.

INVEST IN AN INSULATING PAD

A good insulating pad will keep you comfortable when sleeping on the ground. Such a pad also will serve as an extra moisture barrier and will help keep you warm or cool.

USE THE MOON

If this is your first time camping, schedule the night out to coincide with a full moon. There will be extra light at night to chase away any fears and make navigating a bit easier.

BE AN EARLY BIRD

To see wildlife, hit the trails as early as possible. Early morning hours also are cooler for working.



Remember that camping involves getting in touch with nature. Leave the campsite how you found it, taking trash along with you.

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