

## **Camping Guide for Beginners**

If you didn't grow up camping, a little research can save you a lot of time and aggravation. The first step is visiting a camping show. Here, you will develop a sense of the entire market and all of the cool toys that are available.

### **Shopping:**

If you are shopping for that first RV or tent, you can witness first-hand the many variations. All of the experts will be on-hand to offer advice. Make the experience fun for the kids. A toddler will just love to walk inside and test out every model. They will wear you out.

I remember taking our girls to the camping shows when they were young. We would go inside every unit, take a seat, and dream of a tranquil getaway. By the end of the day, you will develop a list of must-have and have-not items. The kids will have an opinion too!

### **Find the Perfect Campground:**

Again, the camping show is a great place to get started. The local campgrounds are represented in the smaller kiosks at the show. They will offer brochures with photos and a list of amenities available at their campground. A little propaganda never hurt. They can tell you about special events like the local fall fairs and craft shows in the area.

Tying a camping trip together with a fair makes for double the outdoor fun. Our favourites are the Yellow Daisy Fair, the Cotton Pickin' Fair, the Apple Harvest Festival, and the Marble Festival. Plan this right, and you will have an opportunity to sample the local cuisine at 4 or 5 fairs a year. Yes, I attend strictly for the homemade samples; my daughter and I test them all.

### **Pack it and Leave it:**

When you purchase that first RV, you should outfit it with its own accessories. Here is a short list of items to purchase and dedicate to the RV: pots and pans, toaster, cutlery, dishes, cups, chairs, umbrella, tool kit,

shovel, flashlights, tablecloth, pillows, bedding, etc. Leave these inside the camper permanently. You will thank me later for this tip.

We weren't so lucky growing up. Ours was a low budget operation, so we had to pack and unpack every item, every weekend. I wore out a pair of shoes, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. It almost takes the fun out of camping and makes it more like work.

### **Research: Talk, Blog, Read, and Surf**

**Talk:** There is an endless supply of camping resources available today. Talk to your camping friends and see where they like to camp. Join them on an outing. Camping seems to foster camaraderie. Our girls developed a lasting friendship with the children of a camping family we frequently traveled with.

**Blog, Blog, Blog:** Campers are willing to share their stories online. Read and respond to a few camping blogs. You may just pick up a tip or two that will save you some time and make your camping experience more enjoyable.

**Read:** Find a book on camping for beginners, and sit out on your back porch when you read the book, so the mood is just right. Some of the books available here on [www.momanddadcamping.com](http://www.momanddadcamping.com) are just the ticket. They are full of real-life camping stories, tips, and tricks.

**Surf:** I don't know how I survived without the internet growing up. Today, I surf every day searching for anything from work-related suppliers to how to BBQ the perfect ribs.

### **Review the Manual:**

Take the time to review the manual that came with your RV. This may be the most boring read of the summer, but it is well worth the effort. You may just figure out how to get yourself hot running water.

**Practice:**

Test the operation of your equipment the weekend before you travel. Practice hooking up and towing your trailer. Find a large, open parking lot and practice backing up. A back up tip for rookies is to place your hand on the bottom of the steering wheel. When you back up, move your hand in the direction you want the trailer to go. If you get all crossed up, just pull ahead and try it again.

**Planning:**

With all this talk about planning, I must have been a boy scout growing up. I can't stress it enough. Plan, plan, plan!

Call ahead for reservations, use your checklist, watch the weather forecast, and arrive in the daylight hours.

Have fun and write a blog on your first camping trip experience.