



Outdoor Living

Camping Basics

Camping, particularly somewhere without cell phone service, can be a great way to unwind and disconnect from work and other responsibilities.

It's a great way to get up close and personal with nature, allowing you to watch the sunset and sunrise while you cook over a campfire, make s'mores under the stars and listen to animals as you curl up in your sleeping bag and drift off to sleep. Even people who aren't familiar with camping can find easily accessible camping opportunities close to home. The Wilderness Society helps you know where to start.

PICK A LOCATION

New campers can look for campgrounds with amenities: bathrooms, showers, grills and fire pits, electrical hookups, even Wi-Fi access. You can pull your car right up to where you're pitching your tent. If you want to get a little further out, The Wilderness Society suggests national parks, national wildlife refuges, national conservation lands and state parks. These might offer scenery, wildlife viewing and access to trails and more recreation. Many of these require a fee, but generally for public lands it's inexpensive.



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HAVE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

Are you cooking? Have a camp stove and fuel or bring wood or charcoal to light a fire pit or fire up the grill. (Make sure to have a bucket of water and shovel nearby to extinguish the fire.) You need a tent

that's big enough for your group; a tent listed as sleeping six will not fit six adults. Talk to an employee at your local sporting goods store about tents that are easy to set up and take down. If you're expecting rain or camping somewhere damp, consider putting a tarp

under your tent, which adds a little warmth in addition to protection from rain.

Sleeping bags are made to keep you warm down to specific temperatures; if you're going somewhere cold, make sure to get a bag that can do it. Sleeping mats or air mattresses

are highly recommended; they'll help keep you warm and will be much more comfortable than sleeping on the ground.

If you're a new or infrequent camper, you can often rent equipment. Make sure it's in good condition when you pick it up and return it.

Tips for Exploring Outdoors

For people who aren't as comfortable with the outdoors, getting out into nature and away from cell phone reception can be a little scary, but there are plenty of ways to ease into it safely and still have a good time.

The Wilderness Society offered several tips to help hikers and other outdoor adventure seekers be safe while also enjoying the outdoors.

KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING

Find a trail that fits your fitness level and know where it starts and ends and how long it should take. Be aware of any potential difficulties, such as steep climbs or the need for rock scrambling and tell someone where you're going and how long the hike should take.

Have the right supplies, including:

- A map and compass, and know how to use them;
- A pocket knife and fire-starting supplies in a waterproof container;
- Extra food and water for everyone in your party;
- A whistle, a first aid kit (including gear for blisters, which can fast become a hiker's worst enemy), and a headlamp; and
- The right shoes. Talk to



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your local outdoor supply store if you're not sure which shoe would work best for you. Add extra traction if you're going somewhere muddy or icy.

BE PREPARED FOR WEATHER CHANGES

Check the weather before you go, but don't assume the weather won't change. Assume

it will change, so have sun protection, including sunglasses and a hat; rain gear; and extra layers. It's always a good idea to dress in layers so you can take clothes off or put layers back on as needed and not overheat or get cold.

Hypothermia can set in quickly and be especially dangerous if you get hot and sweaty and then the temperatures drop

while you're wearing wet clothes.

LEAVE NO TRACE

If you pack it in, pack it out. This includes all trash, even biodegradable garbage such as apple cores and toilet paper. These can alter the ecosystem and have lasting effects. Bring zip-top plastic bags for shorter hikes and big bags for longer

hikes, and only dispose of trash in appropriate containers. This is especially important if you're in bear country; bears and other animals are attracted to trash. If you see trash while hiking, pick it up.

This also means staying on the designated trails, which helps to protect delicate plants and helps keep hikers and animal life separate.



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Backcountry Camping

People who are interested in next-level camping —away from toilets, electrical outlets, your car and other people — should investigate backcountry camping, which allows one to go off the beaten path.

While this requires more research and preparation, and following “leave no trace”

principles gets harder when you don’t have access to trash cans, it can be a fun, peaceful way to enjoy nature. If you’ve never done it before, check out the National Park Foundation’s guide on how to be safe while having fun.

KNOW WHERE YOU’RE GOING

National parks and other federal agencies often allow backcountry campers to camp throughout the park or protected lands, like national forests. However, there still may be restrictions on where you can camp, so check with

the agency that manages the land to see if you need a permit. Even if it’s wide open, it’s still good to have an idea of where you want to end up. Figure out how far you want to hike in and out, whether there’s enough flat land to pitch a tent and access to streams or other bodies of water, if needed. Avoid potentially dangerous areas, such as those prone to flooding or in predators’ habitats.

LEAVE NO TRACE

There are no trash cans (and no toilets) in the backcountry. Pack out everything,

including food waste and toilet paper. When you need to go to the bathroom, dig a hole at least six inches deep and cover it when you’re done.

You also need to keep your food in sealed containers and keep it a safe distance from your tent, particularly in bear country.

IF YOU DON’T NEED IT, LEAVE IT AT HOME

Carefully consider how much and what kind of food you’ll bring. For a one-night trip, most campers can get by with prepackaged food; bring granola bars, beef jerky, fruit

and other calorie-dense, high-protein foods. If you’re going on a longer trip and will be cooking, plan your menu. Dehydrated food can help save weight and space in your pack. Make sure you have enough food for the trip, remembering you’ll burn more calories hiking than you would on a regular day, but don’t bring too much that you’re miserable carrying it around for days.

Ensure you have access to a water supply and bring water purification chemicals to ensure you’re drinking safe water.

All Kinds of Boating

Want to hit the waterways this summer? A quarter of Americans say they'll spend at least one summer day on a boat.

No matter what kind of boat or waterway you're on, be safe: have life jackets for everyone on board; make sure the boat is in good condition; be aware of safety hazards, water depths, other users and weather; and wear sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat. Recreation.gov offers other things to know to have a good day on the water.

MOTORBOATS

Driving a motorboat isn't dissimilar from driving a car. The driver should be sober, know how to operate the vehicle and obey the rules of the waterway, including speed limits, no-wake zones and watching for other users. Also, keep your boat clean. Lakes throughout the nation are fighting zebra mussels and other invasive species that attach themselves to boats and move between lakes, which harms the natural ecosystem.

KAYAKS

Kayaks are light and small and sit on top of the water, making them a fun and easy way to go boating. You can often rent them, either at the river or lake or from a local sporting goods store; they're easy to transport because of their small size. According to The Active Times, kayaks range in size depending on what you want to do; talk to an employee at a sporting goods store about what you want to do — talk about rapids, how long you want to be out, if you'll pack any gear in the boat, if you'll be on a river, lake or ocean and your experience level. With all boats, you should pay attention to weather,



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but this is especially true in kayaks; big winds can create waves that can swamp a small watercraft.

CANOEES

Canoes are bigger and deeper than

kayaks, so they're harder to maneuver, but you can fit more people and more gear into the boat, according to Canoe & Kayak.

Canoes range from 33 to 40 inches in width; wider canoes are more stable

but harder to maneuver, both in the water and getting it to and from the water. Lengthwise, they can run from 10 to 23 feet. Like kayaks, you can rent these at popular waterways or sporting goods stores.

Outdoor Living with a Dog

Want to get out in nature with your furry friend? Dogs make great hiking and camping buddies and can make your time in nature even more fun.

The American Kennel Club offers tips for getting outside with your dog that help provide a safe and enjoyable time for you both. No matter what you do, make sure you have enough food and water for your pup and any other gear you might need. Also, know the rules before you go. Some parks only allow dogs only on certain trails or areas, and some allow off-leash dogs while others require a leash all the time. And always clean up after your dog.

HIKING

It's hard to find a dog that doesn't do a happy dance when it's time for a walk, so hitting nature trails and making it a hike is sure to net you an excited dog. If you're going to a national or state park, make sure dogs are allowed. Be aware of the trail requirements and your dog's abilities; an older dog might struggle with steep or narrow trails or those that involve scrambling. Also make sure you can do the trails safely while holding onto the leash; know your dog may take off after a squir-



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rel while you're trying to use a log to cross a stream and you could end up knee deep in water.

CAMPING

Sleeping in a tent isn't for every person or every pup, but it's worth a shot; find a

campground close to home or set up a tent in your backyard to test your dog's love of camping. Bring a blanket or other bed and be prepared for your dog to want to check out new sounds and smells in the middle of the night.

With camping and hiking,

particularly if you're deep into forests or other backcountry, keep an eye out for predators and regularly check your dogs for ticks and other parasites.

SWIMMING OR BOATING

Find a dog-friendly beach,

take your dog on a boat (with a life jacket), hit a local lake and teach your dog to dive from the pier or otherwise get into the water. Just keep an eye on your dog; they can be at risk of drowning, getting caught in a current or other water dangers.

Enjoy Nature Responsibly

People know the basic “leave no trace” principles: pack out your trash, don’t stray from the trails.

But the fragility of nature can easily be damaged, particularly in popular areas that see thousands of visitors a year. To keep the country’s natural resources available and beautiful for all visitors, consider The Wilderness Society’s suggestions that go beyond “pack it in, pack it out.”

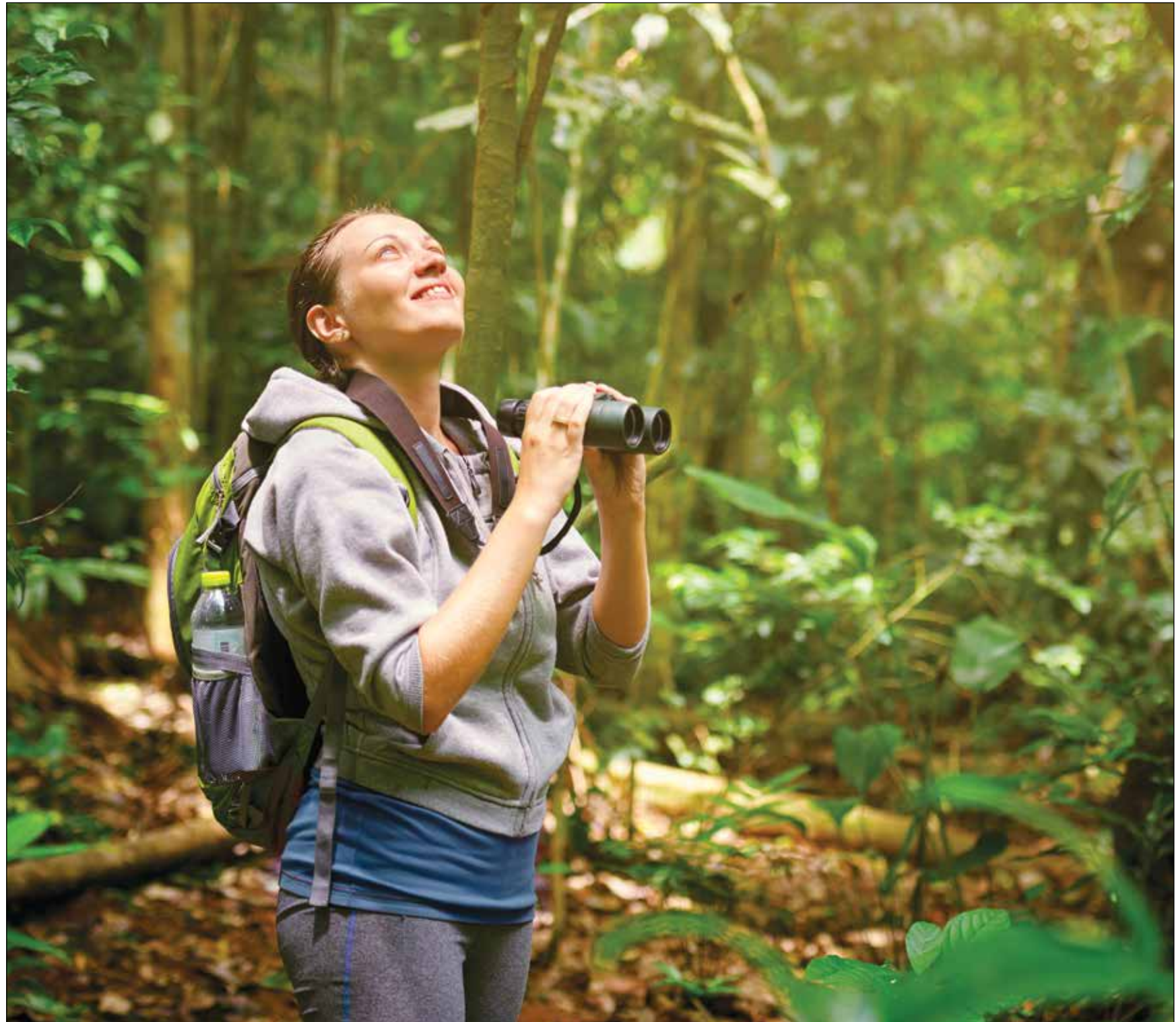
Carry water 200 feet away from streams when you’re washing dishes or yourself. Use biodegradable soap to wash dishes and scatter strained dishwater away from the water source. Urinate 200 feet from a campsite or trail.

Camp where others have camped. Even if you’re going to the backcountry, look for places where others have camped to avoid trampling vegetation. Keep your campsite small and away from water sources and unstable surfaces. Use established fire rings to make campfires and keep them small, using only sticks you can break by hand. Don’t build structures or dig trenches.

Be quiet. Respect wildlife by keeping your noises to a minimum. Don’t blast music from your iPod, don’t yell at other campers and do what you can to preserve the peace and solitude.

Leave it. Rocks, shells, pieces of arrowhead that you find on the ground? Leave them there. It doesn’t matter that you see millions of rocks in a day. Leave everything where you find it.

Do not feed animals. It doesn’t matter how cute the squirrel is or that it’s just a little food, don’t do it. Animals



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that get used to seeing humans as a source of food can make them too friendly to humans, putting animals and, in some cases, people, at risk. Store food and trash properly.

Go in with clean clothes and a clean pack. Visitors can unintentionally

bring in seeds for non-native species, and this can introduce invasive species that can do significant damage to the local ecosystem. Don’t bring in dirt, plants (fruits and vegetables for eating are an exception, but pack out the trash), or firewood. Before you

leave, inspect your clothes and gear for weeds or seeds.

Inspect the area before you leave. Make sure fires are completely extinguished, pick up all your trash and otherwise reduce your footprint as much as possible.

Outdoor Fun Close to Home

There are plenty of ways to embrace outdoor recreation without getting too far from home. Check out your local parks and see what opportunities are offered right in your city or close by that are accessible to people of all levels.

GO FISH

If you live near a waterway, natural or otherwise, go fishing. Many cities even stock lakes with fish to offer this activity to their residents. Before you go fishing, find out what permits are required for your state, what bait and gear are allowed and how many fish you're allowed to keep and how big they must be, TakeMeFishing.org suggests. If you don't mind skinning fish yourself, this is a great addition for a cookout too.

HAVE A COOKOUT

Break out the grill or go to a local park or beach and use a grill or fire pit to cook outside. You can keep it simple with burgers and hot dogs or throw a couple of steaks, fish or corn on the cob on the grill. If you're using a fire pit, cook hot dogs and marshmallows over the open flames or use the embers to make tin foil dinners or Dutch oven dinners. The National Parks Services reminded people to keep control of the fire and coals and fully extinguish the embers.

GO FOR A BIKE RIDE

This is a good family activity that can be adjusted for everyone's ability level. If you've got the right bike and want to hit the trails, go mountain biking. But



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riding through your city streets or local park and trail system is also a great way to see the city, get exercise and enjoy the warm, fresh summer air. Always wear a properly fitted bike helmet and obey all traffic laws.

SIGN UP FOR A 5K (OR LONGER)

Many community festivals, especially around Independence Day, include races as part of the festivities. Local running and biking groups also typically

hold races. These can be family affairs (most 5Ks allow for strollers) or you can go all in for a place on the podium. If you want something a little more involved, look for mud runs, obstacle courses or triathlons.