

Camping – Another Way to Enjoy the Outdoors

Dale Murrish

GMPT Cranktrain Analysis, Pontiac, MI

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Benefits of Camping

- Quantity vs. quality time
 - An extra 8-12 hours outdoors daily
- Different rigors and rewards depending on type chosen
- Kids love it!
- Can get everyone away from their electronic addictions – leave the radio and internet at home
- Knowing what is the minimum required and sometimes doing that can help you be satisfied with the luxuries you enjoy every day

Types of Camping

- Backpacking
- Bicycle and canoe camping
- Youth hostels
- Scout and church camps
- Tent camping with a car
- Folding trailers (popups)
- Hard sided trailers and fifth wheels
- Motor homes
- Where to camp (government and private)

Backpacking

- Carry everything with you
- Water, food and shelter
- Boots & clothing
- Every ounce counts because you're carrying it
- Make a list!

Backpacking Equipment

- Water purification filter, tablets or fuel to boil
 - Depending on wood fires doable but risky
- Compact, lightweight, high energy food
 - Does not have to be expensive freeze-dried
- Lightweight tent, sleeping bag and pad
 - Staying warm and dry is key, especially when sleeping
- Stove, nesting cook kit & dishes
- Get an equipment list from experienced people

Bicycle and Canoe Camping

- Can take a bit more because you will be using wheels to go up hills.
- You'll still have to carry stuff and the canoe over portages if canoeing.
- An item that's never or rarely used but is brought just in case can really slow you down.
- At the end of your trip, evaluate the things you didn't use and consider leaving them home next time.



Arlberg Pass, Austria, June 1981



Amsterdam Airport, August 1981

Youth Hostels

- Found worldwide, hostels are common in Europe, where they originated. In some areas of Germany, they are within a day's hike of each other. While technically not camping, they are included as an inexpensive lodging option.
- The camper brings a sheet sleeping sack; the hostel provides blanket, pillow and usually a continental breakfast.
- Open to all ages, they are most popular with young people. Some hostels have family rooms and cooking facilities. In Europe it can be cheaper for a solo traveler to stay at a youth hostel than a campground.

Pre-trip Planning

- Fail to plan is a plan to fail – could be disastrous in the backcountry
- How you want to travel, where you go determines what to take
 - Give serious thought to what to take and what to leave at home
- Maps – topographical & compass essential if hiking, 1:200,000 ideal for cycling
- Examples from backpacking & cycle trips

Scout and Church Camps

- North America has hundreds of Scout and church-sponsored camps and retreat centers. Accommodations range from cabins with dormitory style bunk beds and common bathrooms to separate rooms with private bath. Meals are usually eaten in a dining hall cafeteria style.
- Snow Mountain Ranch of the Rockies, a YMCA camp near Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, is a great place to meet for a week to celebrate the outdoors and spend time with extended family or friends.
- Michigan camps offer everything from quilting retreats to archery and target shooting to overnight river camping trips and zip lines.

Tent Camping with a Car

- Resist the urge to take the kitchen sink along! Leave your computer and music at home and listen to the woods.
- Take some toys (boats, bikes etc.), but realize the more you take, the more time it takes to pack, load and maintain them.
- Do nature hikes and ranger programs at the parks.
- Make a list and refine it each year!



Car Travel Tips

- Consider limiting electronic devices to a half hour a day and doing creative alternatives like listening to radio dramas for part of the time as a family instead of popping in DVDs. That way it's a shared experience.
- Collect state license plates – use a map instead of an alphabetical list (free geography lesson).
- If your kids get bored with that after a few years, let them memorize the state capitals, key cities and products etc.
- Make it fun – this will defuse the “how many more miles” and “are we there yet?” questions.

Folding Trailers (Popups)

- Longer trips are possible with not sleeping on the ground. It's also more flexible if it rains.
- A good strategy is to buy a lightly used one. The least expensive, lightest and easiest to tow are canvas-sided trailers with beds that slide out. Large windows help you stay close to nature and you never have to worry about a wet sleeping bag.
- Modern folding trailers have a hard shell roof that raises with a crank lift mechanism. Four stabilizing feet anchoring the corners keep the trailer from tipping after the beds slide out; bed supports swing down to support the weight.

Popups

- A family can set up a pop-up in 15-30 minutes depending on the age of the kids, and be cooking dinner or bicycling. It's a little more trouble than pitching a tent, but not much.
- Each year the camper manufacturers add more features; it's hard to find a bare-bones pop-up nowadays. Recent models have larger wheels and tires which are more durable, but most folding trailers are still light enough and low enough to be towed by a mid-sized car, SUV or minivan without large mirrors.

Popup Camper with Bicycles



Custom Built Trailer for Two



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Hard sided trailers and fifth wheels

- These are more expensive to buy than a pop-up, heavier and more difficult to tow, requiring a truck or large SUV.
- You may give up hearing the first call of the birds in the morning but also not be bothered by noisy neighbors or late arrivals at neighboring campsites as much.
- The upside is they are already set up; many have the conveniences of home.



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Motor Homes

- These are usually more expensive than travel trailers.
- Advantages include no need for a tow vehicle or setting up camp.
- Disadvantages include not having a separate vehicle for sightseeing with better gas mileage. Also, the average trailer can last 15-20 years and can have a newer, more reliable tow vehicle every few years.
- Small ones are ideal for two people. Motor homes of all sizes can be rented, especially in the western USA.

Full Timers

- These are people who live full time in their motor home. Usually they have a home base RV park and belong to a club. They often tow a Saturn or other SUV that can be flat towed (odometer disconnected) behind it.
- When traveling they sometimes park their RVs overnight at Walmart, shop there the next day and stock up on supplies. Full-timers cannot be pack rats, since when new items come in, something has to be discarded!

Car Camping Through the Years

- Tent Camping in a Model A Ford
 - 1948 trip to Alaska
 - 19 mpg for 7800 miles, gas cost \$0.36/gal
 - Mechanical brakes, top cruising speed ~45 mph
- Travel Trailer Fifty Years Later
 - 1998 Alaska return trip
 - 11 mpg towing 30 foot Award with 1988 Suburban which got 15-16 without trailer
 - 52,750 trailer miles from 1994-2005
 - 434 nights camping in trailer



Replacing an exhaust valve near
Fairbanks, Alaska, 1948



Baking a birthday cake,
August 24, 1948
Coleman stoves haven't changed much



Home again in Nebraska, 1948
Note water can on running board

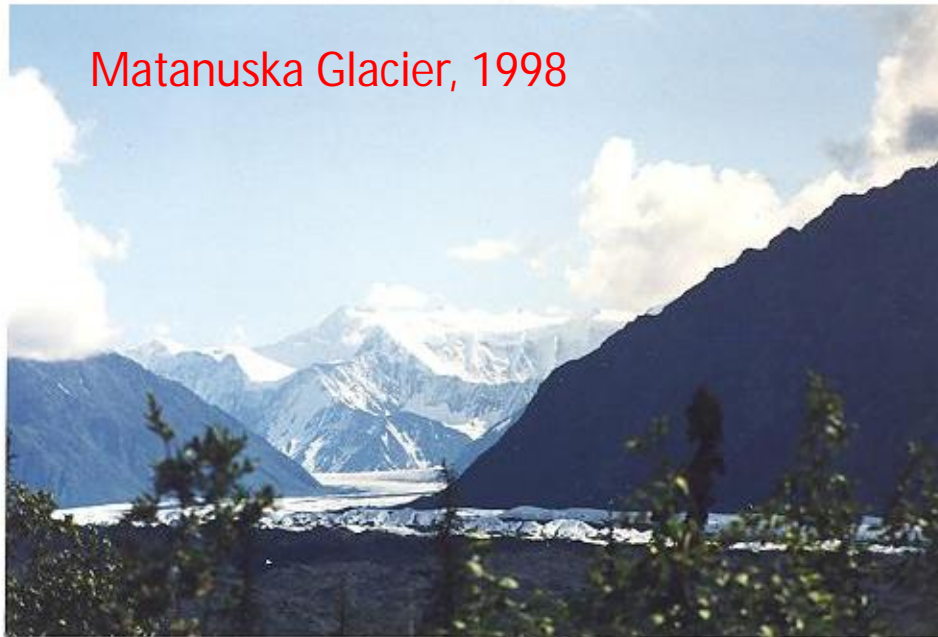
Matanuska Glacier, 1948



Matanuska Campsite, August 24, 1948
Ground too rocky for tent stakes
A-frame tent, no mosquito netting



Matanuska Glacier, 1998



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Ferry Not Taken, 1998



1948: A peak of a flat tire per day for four days; left with five spares, came home with one

1998: 8 wheels on the ground; left with 4 spares, not a single flat tire.

Note the angled roof and lightweight trailer design

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Car Camping Through the Years

- Nimrod Tent Trailer
 - 1965 & 1969 Plymouths and 1980 Chevy Citation
 - About the same extra gallons/mile regardless of tow vehicle and engine (L6, V8 and L4)
 - 2000-5000 mi/year for 20 years

Grand Canyon 1983 – Chevy Citation & Nimrod



Where to camp

- National and State Parks – most campgrounds have flush toilets and showers; site size varies
- National and State Forests – usually quieter and more roomy sites, most have only pit toilets
- Private campgrounds usually have smaller sites and more amenities, cater to RVers needing full hookups.
- Woodalls.com, camping.com, and reserveamerica.com are resources for mostly private campgrounds
- North America has thousands of campgrounds. Get recommendations of friends with similar tastes for the best ones.

Upsides Outweigh the Downsides

- Like anything, there are pros and cons. Traveling by bicycle all summer with three T-shirts and sets of socks, hand washing the set you wore that day every evening can get old. But it gets you back to the basics of life and you appreciate everyday comforts more.
- Unless you have a shower in your RV, you'll have to share a bathroom with other campers. But you can get free travel tips. The five minute walk to the bathroom at night may be a pain, but with city lights how often do you get to see all the stars in the Little Dipper or the Milky Way?
- Backcountry canoeing may not be for everyone, with a pit toilet at a campsite a luxury and a dip in the lake instead of a shower. But where else can you paddle a canoe under a full moon listening to a loon calling for its life-long mate?

Conclusion

- Always someone who has done something more adventurous – don't let that stop you
- Follow **your** dream with your tastes
- Different people have different things they're looking for
 - Some people like hustle-bustle; others like quiet
 - Danish farmer at crowded campground on coast of Yugoslavia
- Borrowing money for vacations leaves a bad aftertaste; borrow equipment rather than buy it
- Keep It Simple, Make It Fun (KISMIF)

Questions and Comments?