



A LITTLE GUIDE TO TENT CAMPING



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AND DOING IT WELL



There's something pretty magical about tent camping, isn't there? Maybe it's because there are so many possibilities and ways to camp that it ticks all of the boxes:

- ✓ You can just throw some things in the boot and head off
- ✓ Or if you're a little more footloose and fancy free, backpacking could open your eyes and heart to a whole world of new places and experiences – all at your own pace
- ✓ The amazing activities and adventures you'll have along the way

There is so much kit available now that you can literally create your own home from home. All with the added bonus of relaxing to the sound of crickets chirping in long grass, raindrops on the canvas, and falling asleep under the stars. **A-maz-ing.**

WISE WORDS

Whether you are camping solo, with your partner, friends and/or family, a beginner or a seasoned pro – we've put together some camping hacks that could make your life much easier:

- 1** The number one camping **MUST DO**, above and beyond anything else, is **TEST YOUR TENT** before you go away! Having a trial run means you can make sure you know how to put it up properly and check that everything is as it should be. It's a really good idea to spend one night in your tent (with all of your gear) as a trial run so you'll be able to fix any issues before you go away.
- 2** In a land where the weather can change more frequently than your socks, we need to be prepared for all eventualities – so remember that bin bags and gaffer tape fix almost anything! Another handy tip from Milly Youngman of mini-adventures.com is to bring a silver space blanket to put under your airbed; this will stop the draft/cold coming up from the floor and giving you a chill.
- 3** As pretty as it might look, blogger Melissa Davies advises us to avoid pitching under a tree. The shade might seem tempting but the sap droplets that will cover your tent are way less appealing! And even if the days are warm, be warned that the nights cool right down, so to keep yourself toastie and warm it's definitely worth splashing out on a decent sleeping bag. The key is to go for one that's got a generous filling and a snug fit.
- 4** Dinner needn't be confined to dry noodles and charcoaled sausages. Check out some awesome recipes in our **Little Guide to Campsite Cooking**, with scrummy ideas that aren't as difficult as they might sound.
- 5** Consider **joining a club** or group. This means you'll always be in the company of like-minded friends who can teach you even more tricks. It could help you feel safer, especially if you camp on your own. You could also get some discounted pitch fees which is a bonus. The Camping and Caravanning Club originated from tent camping so we know our stuff and membership starts from £41 a year for a family.



PACKING UP AND COMING HOME

- 1 Bag up all your wet clothes together, and all the clean stuff separately so it's easier to sort out when you get back home.
- 2 If there are facilities on site, get all the washing up done before you pack away – it can be stored until next time.
- 3 If you are unable to mend anything that gets broken while you are away, keep a note of what it was so you can get it seen to when you get back.
- 4 Give the tent a sweep/shake out before you pack it away. You don't want anything sharp to damage it.
- 5 A mouldy tent smells! If it's wet when you pack it away, make sure you put it back out to dry as soon as you get back.
- 6 Likewise for sleeping equipment – put them to air before storing away again. Turning sleeping bags inside out will help freshen them up.
- 7 Do final checks of your pitch before you drive off to make sure nothing has been left behind.
- 8 Don't forget to put your pegs in carefully so you don't lose any...although having spares is always a good idea.

KEEP IT CLEAN, PLEASE...

If you want it to last (and keep you warm and dry) then no matter what material your tent is made from, keeping it clean will help preserve its lifespan and quality. Sounds easy enough, right? Well, although it is possible to thoroughly clean a tent, it's not a job anyone looks forward to! So with a few helpful tips, hopefully you won't need to do a major clean too often:

- ★ It's a good idea to use inexpensive builder's plastic sheeting under the tent when you're pitching or putting it away. It keeps the main tent fabric off the grass where it could pick up grass or mud stains.
- ★ If the ground is particularly poor, you can even leave it underneath your groundsheet during your holiday to protect the groundsheet itself.
- ★ Small sheets of the same plastic can be used around the doors and underneath muddy boots, backpacks and soggy clothing – but be aware that plastic can get slippery when wet.
- ★ Some tents can be packed away with their inner tents inside. If you do this, be extra careful not to get muck from the outside of the tent on to the inners. If you take the inners out before packing away, it's worth keeping them in a separate bag to keep them clean.
- ★ Keep all spare pegs, guys and other small parts in a sealable bag and wipe them off before putting them away.

AVOIDING MOULD AND MILDEW

Dry your tent. Simple. Mould and mildew don't just make the tent look grubby and smell bad, in some cases they can make it unusable. Leaving a cotton tent damp for an extended period can lead to the fabric rotting away and forming holes.

- ★ It's best to take down your tent when it is as dry as possible. That won't always be possible – we've all had to take tents down in the pouring rain – but avoid it if you can.
- ★ Shake off as much water as possible and wipe more off with a clean dry cloth/towel, but not one washed in detergent as this can damage the tent's waterproof coating.
- ★ If it's the slightest bit damp or really wet then you'll need another plan.
- ★ If you have room in the car, drape the tent over the other luggage in the boot or perhaps over an empty back seat.
- ★ If you need to pack the tent away damp, unpack it and start the drying process as soon as you get home.
- ★ Don't put the job off – leaving a damp tent in its bag for just a few days has probably finished off more tents than anything else.
- ★ Hang the tent up to dry somewhere airy – outside if you can or inside if you have room.
- ★ When you are sure the tent is bone dry, it will keep much better if you store it lightly folded in the airing cupboard, rather than tightly packed in its bag.



LETTING RIP

The most common damage and subsequent repair you will have to face with a modern tent is a broken or bent pole. It's always handy to have a spare. Some manufacturers supply an extra section of pole with their tents, otherwise you can buy poles from your local camping retailer. It's worth taking a pole with you to the shop to make sure you buy the correct type and size.

Almost as common will be a split seam or guy line anchor coming loose. A small sewing kit that includes some strong thread will enable you to deal with most simple repairs of this type, and you can usually buy repair kits at camping shops.

Most good tents will have tape-sealed seams. These can sometimes leak but are easy to repair with proprietary seam sealer – your tent may come with a sample tube of sealant. Don't try to seal seams until the tent is completely dry though. Paint the sealer on to the seam and give it time to dry – a day or two is best, so do the job well before your weekend away.

- ★ Small tears, punctures and rips in either tent fabric or groundsheets can be fixed temporarily with 'gaffer' tape.
- ★ Self-adhesive tent patches are available in assorted fabrics and colours from the manufacturer and some tents will contain a little piece of the tent's fabric for more permanent patching.
- ★ The secret of a neat temporary repair, either with tape or a self-adhesive patch, is to make sure the area round the tear or hole is clean and dry. Then get somebody inside the tent to hold a solid flat object (a chopping board or book) against the fabric so you have something firm to push against.
- ★ Finally, give the patch and the area around it a good spray of reproofers to keep your tent waterproof for the rest of your holiday.



LET IT RAIN

Don't panic if your old tent starts leaking – it doesn't necessarily mean you have to start searching for a new one. It's very likely you'll be able to make your tent waterproof again whether you are at home or on a campsite. Reproofing materials come with full instructions, and are available at most decent camping or outdoor shops. The leading brands are Nikwax and Grangers, both available from GO Outdoors.

And don't forget you can inadvertently decrease the water resistance of your tent yourself. Detergents are designed to allow water to penetrate grease and muck so it can be washed away. If you get detergent on your tent, it will do the same thing and let water in. So don't let children blow bubbles round the tent (if they 'pop' on the fabric you could find a damp patch later) and avoid drying wet towels on the side of your tent (some detergent may be left from the towel's last wash).

HEY, ZIP IT

Zips should be treated with respect. Don't tread on them and make sure you wash any mud or grit off as soon as possible. If your zip starts sticking, try not to force it. There are special lubricants on the market to free it up or you could use beeswax. Never use washing up liquid or you could end up reducing your tent's water resistance (see above).

S.O.S, NOT R.I.P

If you have room to pack it, here is a short list of useful items for an emergency repair kit that will help if you have a problem with your tent or other camping kit.

- ★ Roll of 'gaffer' tape
- ★ Self-adhesive tent patches
- ★ Eyelet kit with punch and eyeleting tool
- ★ Tube of seam sealant
- ★ Spare pole section
- ★ Needle, thimble and strong thread
- ★ Spare guy lines and fittings
- ★ Reproofing spray



DO IT LIKE A DUDE

It's more a question of what can't you do when you're camping; with endless space, limitless boundaries and copious accessibility, now is the time to get adventurous with that bucket list! Being able to get up close and personal to some really magical spots, and the huge network of campsites across the UK (and beyond), means you really can do things you've only ever dreamed of...or seen on the telly....so give some of these a try and have a splashing time!

- ★ Bodyboarding
- ★ White water rafting
- ★ Fishing
- ★ Wild swimming
- ★ Kayaking/canoeing

If getting wet isn't on the to-do list, get your creative on and why not indulge in:

- ★ Photography: do this as a scavenger hunt challenge; you don't even need a posh camera - just use your smartphone and see how many things you can tick off - get competitive and challenge your camping buddies to do the same.
- ★ Sandcastle-off: who said building sandcastles was kids' play? You versus a pal and five minutes on the clock to create your masterpiece.
- ★ Conversation games: a more sociable alternative to board games, and no equipment necessary! Get to know some new friends, or play with your camping compadres:
 - **Try out Two Truths and a Lie.** Players take turns sharing three "facts" about themselves. Two of them are absolutely true. One is a complete lie. The other players have to guess which one is the lie.
 - **Would You Rather...?.** Choose between one of two hypothetical choices. For example: "Would you rather give up chocolate for the rest of your life or change your name to Donald Trump?" Anyone can throw a question out there; everyone states their own answer. It gets lively as people debate.
- ★ Interior superior: Time to get funky! Make your camping break as cool as ice by bejazzling your basecamp! Be the envy of the campsite by mixing up some solar powered fairy lights with a bit of vintage bunting, add a sprinkle of cushions and some super fluffy throws, maybe a lantern here and there, and hey presto - you'll be the grooviest tent on the campsite.



YOU'RE REALLY GOING PLACES...

So now that you've got your tent, you'll need somewhere to go with it, and boy are there some beautiful locations out there!

Here's some great Club Sites for tent camping:



KESWICK CLUB SITE (Cumbria) will spoil you. As if being able to pitch right on the actual shore of Derwentwater wasn't cool enough, there's so much to do you'll need to be there for weeks! Hillside or lakeside rambles, pub grub, mountain hikes, bike trials, canoeing, kayaking...it goes on and on. It also has great facilities including a drying room and cooking area for backpackers.



TREGURRIAN CLUB SITE (nr Newquay) is a favourite among the beach lovers and surfer dudes out there. The site is at the top of a hill leading down to the stunning Watergate Bay where you can don your wetsuit and hit the surf or kick back and catch some rays. You're also just down the road from Fistral Beach at Newquay (check out the Boardmasters Festival each August) and beautiful Padstow is only a half hour drive away.



ST NEOTS CLUB SITE (Cambridgeshire) is a must for fishing enthusiasts. This beauty of a site is located right on the banks of the River Ouse. Bag yourself a riverside pitch and sit back and watch the boats sail by, or cast a line and fish away to your heart's content!

For more great advice, especially if you're new to camping, from our experts can be found on our website – check it out!

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