

## Camping

# Camping in the USA how to have a great vacation

National journalist Charles Kuralt once said, "; Thanks to the Interstate Highway System, it is now possible to travel across the country from coast to coast without seeing anything. "

While US highways provide an undeniably efficient method of travel, it's true that unless you journey off the beaten path, you may never see the amazing natural wonders found on the land we call the United States of America. Camping is widely known as one of the best ways to truly experience the outdoors, with easy access to the greatest attractions you can only see here: waterfalls, forests, swimming holes, hot springs, cold springs, canyons, mountain tops... rocks for climbing, rivers for rafting, trails for riding.



The places to go and things to do are endless, which is why the smartest way to start your trip is with a call to your travel agent, who can connect you to quality outfitters and expert guides who will make your vacation easy, affordable, and well worth every moment you spend on holiday. These passionate companies can take you to sites and offer experiences you could never create on your own, ensuring your comfort and safety along the way.

### The Benefits of Using an Outfitter

Organized trips are designed to show you America's best natural and cultural assets while providing an enjoyable vacation. Participating in some activities and traveling through some areas absolutely require guides, and even when not required, traveling with a guide is always a good idea. Camp guides can assist and instruct anyone from beginners to experts, and outfitters know exactly where and when to go, have special access to people and places you may not find on your own, and above all, have your safety and flat-out fun as their priority throughout the entire trip.



If you've never prepared for a camping trip away from home, you might be shocked at how many hours of planning and how much expensive equipment it takes, and even then, it might be three or four more trips before you are practiced at it and properly equipped. And if you have planned a trip on your own, you'll certainly appreciate how easy camping is when someone else takes care of the details.

Use your travel agent to find a good company who's been in business for a while, pays attention to quality, and is committed to giving you an amazing experience for a great value.

Most people associate great camping with great weather, but you can still camp year-round, you just need to pick the right destination and the right camp company, who will make your trip completely comfortable. There's always something to do outdoors: wilderness hiking, whitewater rafting, horseback riding, sea kayaking, canoe trips, photography, mountain biking, swamp tours and so much more...

### **Campers Come in All Ages**

Talk to your agent about who you travel with, and you'll be pleased to find lots of options for all kinds of groups, even for singles and campers who prefer custom, independent trips. Some trips are designed specifically to appeal to different age groups: young adult trips might focus on activities and nightlife that appeal to their age range, but there are no age restrictions whatsoever! Anyone can enjoy a trip into the wilderness.

Camping and outdoor activities are also great family experiences, and guides are trained to work with younger children. If you have children under 6, however, you may want to wait until they are older and can really appreciate your expedition...also; some companies do enforce minimum age requirements - just check with your agent before you book.

### **Camping Made Easy**

Camping packages vary from company to company, but for the most part, your trip price includes:

- A professional guide
- Transportation during the trip
- All camping equipment (except for a sleeping bag and personal items), including tents, food storage containers, lights, cooking equipment, etc.
- Admission to parks, monuments, and other fee-based attractions in your itinerary
- Additional meals, transportation, and lodging, depending on your package
- Alternate activities and excursions if the weather doesn't cooperate

### **Packing Smart**

The beauty of a camping trek is that you only need a sleeping bag, your clothes, and personal items - and a lot of positive energy! Pack light and check with your agent to see if there are any trip-specific luggage guidelines; if you are staying at a hotel on either end of the trip, you may be able to arrange storage for additional luggage.

Here are some general packing suggestions and ideas, but always ask for a trip-specific checklist before you go:

- First, talk to your agent to get the latest airline regulations for carry-on items if you are flying, and pack accordingly
- If you don't already own any, consider buying clothing for the trip that blocks sun and bugs, dries easily, wicks away moisture, and is breathable - ask someone at your local outdoors shop for shopping advice
- Dress casually and comfortably, packing clothes that layer well for unexpected temperature changes; note that you will probably have access to washing machines at some point during the trip
- Hiking shoes or boots, secure and comfortable walking shoes, and waterproof sandals (you may also want a pair of easy-on/off flip flops)
- Hat, scarf, and weather-proof gloves
- Swimwear, sunscreen, and sunglasses
- Camera, film, and binoculars
- Alarm clock, watch, any power adapters you need (although your access to electricity may be limited), and a

small torch flashlight

- Insect repellent that's 20% DEET or more
- Temperature appropriate sleeping bag and travel pillow
- Towel, face cloth, toiletries, and medicines
- A way to carry important documents and cash that you do not want to leave at your campsite

### **First-Timer Fun**

You may be pleasantly surprised to find how easy and relaxing it is to sleep in the great outdoors. Professional companies provide high-quality, heavy-duty tents, which really make a difference in your comfort level. If you are on a group trip with travelers you don't know, you may be paired up with a few others of the same sex. Besides the sleeping bag you bring, your trekking company may also provide a thermal sleeping mat. If you really want more comfort, inquire about an inflatable mattress. Also note that some companies may take you to permanent campsites, where you'll have access to primitive cabins or tent cabins.

### **What to Expect from Your Campsite**

Trips can use both National and State park campsites and private campgrounds. Depending on the destinations and activities you choose, you may have hot showers and modern plumbing, and some sites even have swimming pools, bars, and laundry facilities on site. Rustic campgrounds do an authentic job of highlighting an area's natural beauty and can be just as enjoyable. A good company will keep rough circumstances to a minimum to ensure that you absolutely love your trip. But also remember that if you choose to travel to some of the wildest or most remote natural attractions, you may want to prepare yourself for a fun but primitive experience.

### **Your Health & Fitness**

Don't worry! Anyone - at any fitness level - can enjoy an outdoor trip. Many activities are optional, and you have complete freedom choose to participate or explore and relax on your own. Most parks offer a variety of hiking trails for all levels, and many other activities do not require previous experience and are not fitness-related at all. Just make sure you tell your agent or the camping company about special health concerns in advance.

### **Budget & Logistics**

Budget another \$25 per day, at least, for miscellaneous costs. You may not have access to an ATM, so bring the amount of cash you're comfortable carrying, along with traveler's checks for the rest. You may also be asked to put a small amount of money toward a food budget for the group.

Also consider tipping your guide, who will work very hard on your behalf throughout the trip - \$3 per person, per day is a good guideline.

Because of the nature of this kind of travel, you may also be required to purchase a special insurance policy that includes medical evacuation. Policies like this are not ways for travel companies to make extra money - they are usually affordable and in your best interest, as most standard health care plans do not cover many kinds of medical emergencies on the road.



Talk to your agent about any flight arrangements you need to make, if air tickets are not part of your package. Be sure to plan your flights so you have more than enough time to adjust to traveling and meet your guides. If you miss a departure, you will probably be responsible for additional expenses. Likewise, your agent will arrange any additional hotel stays that you need, or, if you are traveling alone, you may be able to share a room with another member of your group if you ask.

And if you can swing it... this might be the perfect time to tack on a weekend trip to a new or favorite city - it won't hurt to see what your options are.

### **Breathe Easy**

Once everything is set, you can relax and look forward to your journey. Just remember the importance of traveling responsibly - not only for your own safety, but also to protect the environment and natural resources you've come to see. Producing minimal trash, putting litter where it belongs, following your guide's instructions, and drinking in moderation are all behaviors that show your respect for fellow travelers and the fragile ecosystem you occupy. It won't be too difficult to understand how important this is once you are surrounded by the best of America - one of the most unique and remarkable landscapes in the world.

Once you've completed your trip, you might find yourself wanting to make plans for another. It would take a lifetime to see even most of the country, but you can experience more of it, and its best attractions, with the help of an experienced outfitter and travel agent who will work together to make your camping vacation one of the best of your life.