



# The **VACATION** *Close to home!*

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## Packing Primer for Family Campers

Each year, families across the country take off on vacations ranging from trips to theme parks to ballpark tours to educational jaunts complete with visits to some of the country's finest museums. Another popular and fun family outing that doesn't even require you roam too far from home is camping. Sleeping under the stars and toasting marshmallows is something many families have come to know and love.

*For those looking to join the growing trend and spend a few nights camping with their families, here are a few essentials to pack along.*

**Tent.** A tent is among the more essential items you'll want to bring along. While you can sleep in sleeping bags under the stars, you'll want a tent in case of inclement weather or if any uninvited (animal) guests should show up. Parents might also want to consider bringing along a separate tent for the kids.

**Tarp.** A tarp is something many first-time campers often forget. The benefit of a tarp is the protection it provides on the flooring of your tent, which can grow uncomfortable in the case of rain.

**Bedding.** While most are quick to pack the sleeping bags, not everyone remembers to include some pillows. Though adults can get by with just sleeping bags, children might struggle to get some shuteye without a pillow to rest their head on. In addition, any prospective campers who might have a history of back problems should consider bringing along an air mattress and a compressor to inflate it.

**First-aid kit.** Accidents happen on camping trips, so make sure your first-aid kit is fully loaded and packed along.

**Marshmallows.** While a tent, tarp and bedding are essentials for adults on camping trips, children will need to roast a few marshmallows to make their trip complete.

**Stove and appropriate gas.** These can be small or medium sized, depending on how many campers you'll need to cook for. Remember to bring along whichever gas your stove uses, and remember, the longer your stove is on, the more gas you'll need. To be safe, pack along an extra tank.

**Garbage bags.** Keep close track of all your trash to avoid damaging the environment and landing in the park ranger's doghouse. Try bags with an easy tie at the top that you can open and close easily, so trash doesn't blow away with each gust of wind.

**Whistles.** Part of the joy of camping is getting to explore nature. Since most children tend to have an exploratory nature, it can be easy for them to get lost and scared in the woods. Having them wear a whistle necklace around their neck or carry one with them at all times can be a good means of making sure they're easy to find should they get lost.

**Water.** A couple of gallons of drinking water should suffice, but bringing along an extra gallon or two can't hurt. Also, water bottles are essential for any campers who will be doing some hiking.

**Wood.** If you have firewood lying around the house and can afford to pack it into your vehicle, by all means bring some along. Finding viable firewood can be difficult for first-time or even veteran campers, so don't be ashamed to pack your own.

**Utensils and dishes.** Spoons, forks, knives strong enough to cut through meat and can openers should be packed. Also, don't forget to pack along some paper dishes or camping dishes in addition to cups, pots and pans. Try bringing some resealable containers as well as a means to saving space.

**Sun protection.** This includes both sunglasses as well as sunblock, both of which are absolutely necessary.

**Linens and clothing.** Don't forget a few bath towels and some changes of clothing. If you'll be on an extended camping trip, pack rope, bungee cords and clothespins to hang laundered linens and clothes on.

**Flashlights.** Another necessity for campers with children. Bring along at least two and some extra batteries just in case.

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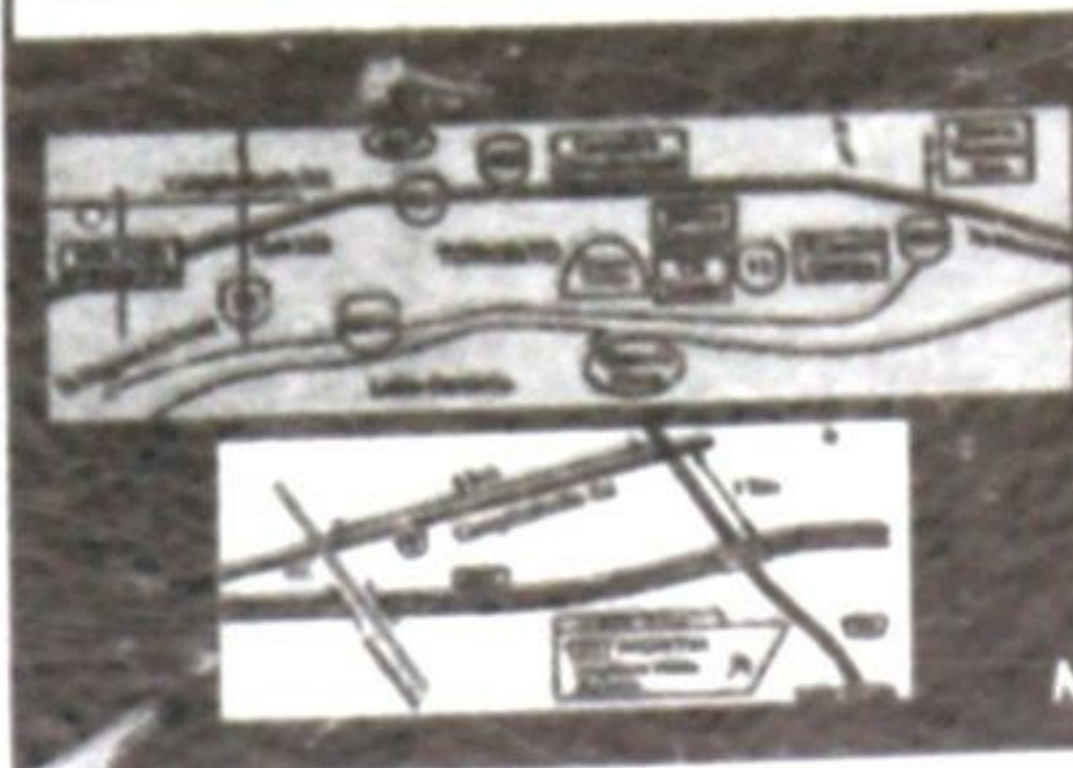
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