



How to Camp As a Lifestyle

Want to [escape from the rut of work/bills/schedules](#) and [see the world](#)? Try camping as a lifestyle. Every day is yours to do exactly as you please, you can travel, [work seasonally](#), and rack up several lifetimes-worth of experience. Once you've tasted that kind of freedom, it will be difficult to go back to a 9 to 5 existence.

Steps

- 1 Save money.** You can't do anything without some cash first. But you don't need to save forever. A few grand can last a very long time if you budget, and will at least get you started.
- 2 Give away or sell most of what you own.** If you have things you cannot part with, rent a storage unit. They're much cheaper out in small towns than in big cities. Incorporate your monthly storage unit expense into your budget.
- 3 Pick your mode of transportation.** You're not going to want to sit around somewhere. Boredom is actually the toughest thing you'll face.
 - **Hiking.** Hiking is by far the hardest way to go. Everything you need is latched to your back, and the ground you can cover is limited. However, thousands of people hike incredible distances every year on major national scenic trails, and many find the experience addictive. Keep in mind that just because you're hiking doesn't mean you always have to be 'on the move'. Find a spot you like way off trail and stay as long as your food lasts. You can also use buses, cabs and shuttles to drop you off in the middle of nowhere, then hike in and find some place gorgeous to stay for a while.
 - **Biking.** Biking allows you to cover much greater distances, and it's easier than [backpacking](#). However, you are tied to roads, instead of on trails. Get 'touring' bikes and rig them out with saddlebags and pull a cargo trailer. [Mountain bikes](#) can work also, if you plan on doing any off-road touring, or just exploring down trails and 4x4 roads. Bike touring is hardest in the mountains, with continual climbs. But the mountains are where the majority of public lands are in America, with lots of free camping. But if you have children, as well as all your gear, biking might not provide enough long-term room for you.
 - **Canoeing.** Get a 17'4" or longer for touring so it tracks straight. Camp on islands. You can swim, fish, and bathe every day. You can travel almost anywhere via big rivers, lakes, and canals. Water is where all the life is - you can guarantee every minute will be scenic. It's where towns are also, so getting groceries and necessities will be as close as the next bridge.
 - **Get a 4 wheel drive vehicle and do them all.** Use backpacking gear, put bikes on the back, and your canoe on top. This way you're ready for anything. You can leave the car and hike in, take a trip down a river, go explore an area on mountain bikes. If you have more than one bike, place rags between them so metal isn't scraped away going down bumpy 4x4 roads. Lightweight bulky items can be strapped in under the canoe. And the inside of a vehicle has all the room you'll ever need. The drawback of course is the [cost of gas](#) and repairs. But if you budget for it, and stay put in each spot as long as possible, you can make it work.
- 4 Rough out some plans of where you want to go.** Come up with a general itinerary. Find out about any [public lands](#) you're visiting through the internet - and if you call, or write, they'll send you an avalanche of information for free. Come up with a set period of time, say a month, or six months, or a year, and plan and budget for it.
- 5 Outline a budget, and stick to it fanatically.** The minute you begin deviating from your budget it will only get worse, the downward spiral will begin, and you will be broke and desperate in no time. Allow so much money to each month, and when you're out, stay put, until the next month begins. If that means an extra week or two in the same boring spot, do it. The longer you stay in one place the more you'll come to love it. Stay a month, and leaving will be like moving out of your home.

6 Get [high-quality tents](#) and sleeping bags, **if you can afford them**. Your tent is your only shelter - make it comfortable. Sleeping bags should be rated below zero - synthetic tend to be more durable than down, and still work when wet. Have plenty of wool clothing, blankets, tarps, and rope. Be aware that cotton has no insulating value when wet, unlike wool and synthetics, so have non-cotton versions of all clothing items with you. Bamboo mats are nice and great to lay out on. Sleeping on the ground will wear you out fast - get thick foam pads, or an inflatable mattress. And if you have the room, a futon mattress is worth its weight in gold.

7 **Hit the road, or trail, or river - whatever the case may be.** Relax, stay organized, stick to your budget and your plans. Always set up camp long before dark, or you'll end up in motel territory. If a motel is part of your monthly budget - fine...show up early, and enjoy it for a full 24 hours. But if you end up getting last-minute motels out of poor planning and decision-making, you'll be back in the city in no time, and back to work.

8 Make sure there's a major water source **wherever you're going, whether it's a creek, lake, or river, or hot springs**. You're going to need to bathe, [wash dishes](#), do laundry (if you're hardcore - most people use laundromats), drinking water, possible [edible plants](#), etc. Not only is water where all the life is, it's where most of the food is also. Wild fruiting trees do very well off water, and aquatic plants such as cattail are in abundance. Bathing on a daily basis will ground you in this lifestyle like nothing else. The greatest luxury are [hot springs](#). They are all over the west in the US, generally free to camp beside, some deep in wilderness areas - and often a great spot to meet similar-minded people.

- It's very important to know [How to Purify Water](#) so that no one gets sick.

9 **Go where it's warm, and move seasonally.** Nothing will destroy your enthusiasm for this lifestyle like cold. There's simply no reason to be cold and sit in your bag in the tent. In the U.S., focus on the south, places like northern Florida, and southern [Arizona](#) and [New Mexico](#) are great in the winter - tons of wild land, spectacular, nobody around, mild weather. Over the summers, go north. Check out [Montana](#) or the Adirondacks.

10 Utilize free campgrounds. Some have stay limits of up to a month. If you're on the trail, or along the river - free camping is everywhere. But in a car, it's not so easy - you'll have to search. There are still a surprising amount of low-use free campgrounds across the U.S. And often if you go down any dirt road, in National Forest lands and BLM, it will lead to something interesting...

- Such as this great camp off Owl Creek down in the Apalachicola Forest of northern Florida...
- Or this open field in Oconee National Forest with a grove of persimmon trees...
- Or this spot in a meadow off Fontana lake when the reservoir was low...
- Off East Bay in Florida under the live oaks...
- Off Jones Pond in the Adirondacks...
- All over New Hampshire and Maine sponsored by the AMC

11 **RVers have more options.** Even in densely populated areas, they can find a free place to stop for the night by joining these online clubs: Boondockers Welcome, Harvest Hosts, RV Golf Club and Overnight RV Parking. A whole year's membership is generally less than the cost of one night in a campground.

12 Get hammocks. Anything that will increase your comfort level is huge. Without furniture, it gets old sitting on the ground. You can even [sleep in your hammocks](#).

13 Bathe daily. Even a quick dip in a cold river can go miles toward making you feel clean and refreshed. Feeling clean is very important, and will cut down on the longings for a motel. If there's no water source nearby, sunbathe. An hour in the sun will open up all your pores and make you feel clean. If there is no sun, and it's cold - [build a sweatlodge](#) out of saplings and tarps and blankets. But consider that if there's no sun and it's cold, maybe you're in the wrong place!

14 **Eat well.** You can cook anything you like out on a fire. Try cast iron skillets and baking in a Dutch Oven. Stromboli, cinnamon rolls, lentil stew, pancakes on the griddle, roasted yams in the fire, it is all possible. Everything tastes better cooked over a fire - and considering your Spartan lifestyle, you'll worship every bite. Your

appreciation for life and everything it offers will jump 1000%. You can even [dry fruits into leathers](#) and [smoke your own jerky](#). If you do not spoil yourself at meal-time, you will start longing for life indoors and inevitably break down.

15 [Learn edible plants](#). Pack as many guides with you of edible plants that you can - take a small library.

There is a staggering abundance of wild food out there, if you only look around and get the most basic knowledge of edible plants. Incorporate whatever you find into your diet - this will easily cover any nutrients you're craving for with your limited access to fresh food. It will also connect you to the land, and build some independence. Make sure you eat sustainably, though, leaving some of the plants behind.

- Always use the Universal Edibility Test (as described in [How to Test if a Plant Is Edible](#)) or something similar to make sure the plant is safe to eat.
- Here are some ideas:
 - [How to Harvest Wild Rice](#)
 - [How to Eat Yucca](#)
 - [How to Eat Prickly Pear Cactus](#)

16 [Try to slow down and enjoy life](#). This is harder than it sounds. See [How to Be Laid Back](#). Find things to do besides just playing and loafing. For instance:

- Work on primitive crafts, such as cordage, vine baskets, mats, coconut bowls, sandals, etc.:
 - Make a pine needle basket.
 - Try beading and sewing a pair of [moccasins](#).
 - Start building a primitive shelter, such as a thatched hut.
- [Paint](#) some of the fantastic scenes you come across, if you're an artist. Small galleries are very open to local work. An income from this could go a long ways towards supporting your minimalistic lifestyle.
- Take some time to read literature and [philosophy](#), and try to get a feel for the 'big picture'.

17 [Work seasonally](#). When you're low on money, go make some more for a while. Do something new and interesting. Tourist areas are always hiring outside people during their period of peak tourism, and the jobs run the gamut. You can also make money gathering and selling wild mushrooms. For example, you can sell lobster mushrooms for \$15/lb to chefs in high-end restaurants, and they're a lot of fun to gather. You can even make money gathering seed such as 'desert willow' to sell to companies for reforestation. There's infinite opportunities out there to make some cash and regroup - you don't need to be tied to a job/career to survive.

18 [Document your experiences](#). [Keep a journal](#) of all that happens, as well as your thoughts and moods. Take plenty of pictures. It will become a precious record of one of the most significant times in your life.

Can you answer these readers' questions?

 Refresh

On [How to Treat a Torn Calf Muscle](#), a reader asks:

I had a sprained calf muscle injury about 4 weeks ago, I am walking a to better now, but I have pins and needles in my frequently, what can I do to prevent this?

Your answer...

Reply

On **How to Write a Problem Statement**, a reader asks:

How to write statement of the problem for research in a tone of proposed solution?

Your answer...

Reply

On **How to Visit Scoan**, a reader asks:

The Morning Water is it by donation, pay certain amount for it of free?

Your answer...

Reply

Tips

- Have respect for the surroundings that are your new temporary home so that the natural beauty will be preserved for those who come after you. Don't pollute water sources by bathing or washing dishes with soap, even the biodegradable kind. Be proficient in making latrines and catholes for human waste, don't damage vegetation--move your tent every couple of days to let the grass underneath recover, or camp on a more durable surface. Watch your campfire impact--use only a pre-existing fire ring if possible. In short, don't bring a high-impact "civilized" lifestyle with you--visit [Leave No Trace](#) for information about minimum impact goals and practices for life in the outdoors.

Warnings

- Be safe. While most people on the trails are friendly, you will be miles away from bystanders, police, or locked doors. Stay friendly and calm but alert, and know how to defend yourself should the need arise. You may want to carry pepper spray or some form of personal protection in an accessible location.
- Prevent tick bites. Lyme disease is the most widespread vector-borne infectious disease in the United States and can have permanent health consequences. Lyme disease, Bartonella, Babesia, and other tick-borne diseases are spread by several kinds of ticks and are most commonly transmitted in the Northeast, Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic, and Southeast regions during the spring, summer, and fall. During these times, wear long pants tucked into socks to prevent ticks from climbing up your legs. Check your whole body and scalp for ticks every night. If you find an attached tick, grasp the head with tweezers and pull straight out. A precautionary run of a few weeks of antibiotics is recommended immediately after any tick bite.
- Try not to become injured. Those without health insurance may find their trip cut short by an emergency room visit.

Sources and Citations

- [Homesteading in Tennessee](#) - Original source, shared with permission.

Made Recently

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Upload a picture for other readers to see.