

Camping



Winneshiek County Conservation Equipment and Recommendations:

- **Who:** Adult supervision required
- **What:** no equipment available
- **Where:** Lake Meyer Park & Campground, Kendallville Park & Campground. Hook-up and tent sites available. Call 563.534.7145 for more information.

Introduction

Camping varies from pitching a tent in your backyard, pulling an RV into an established campground, or backpacking in remote wilderness areas. Camping in all different forms continues to gain popularity as people look for ways to experience nature.

There have been many technical advances in camping materials and gear. Lightweight nylon tents are easier to pack and set up than their canvas predecessors. They offer superior protection from rain, and they are easier to carry. Lightweight aluminum cookware and portable stoves have also reduced the overall weight of gear for primitive campers. Sleeping bags continue to evolve to give you lightweight, warm, and earth-friendly ways to enjoy your camping experience.

A Brief History

In North America, individuals have camped in the wilderness for recreation since the early 1870s, traveling on foot, on horseback, or by canoe. But there was no organized camping. The founder of modern recreational camping was Thomas Hiram Holding, who wrote the first edition of *The Camper's Handbook* in 1908. The organization of camping for fun on a large scale did not develop until after World War II, when increased leisure time and the advent of camping with motorized vehicles caused a tremendous growth in the activity.

Equipment & Supplies

You may need things such as a tent, waterproof groundcloth, sleeping bags and pads, pillows, lanterns, cooking supplies, camp stove or fire supplies, flashlights and extra batteries, water/water filter, first aid kit, and other equipment that you think your family or group will want. When you are ready to invest in your own things, try looking for used equipment on the Internet, as well as local yard sales, as new items can be expensive. Your equipment choices will depend somewhat on what type of camping you will be doing.

Regulations

Whether you are camping in an established camp ground or a wilderness setting, there may be fees and permits that you will need to get. Check into this ahead of time so you are prepared when you arrive. If you are camping in a wilderness area, there are additional regulations

regarding what materials you can bring into camp and the condition your campsite must be in when you leave. There may also be regulations regarding the building of fires. Check before you make your plans!

Skills & Strategies

Building a Campfire

See the *Campfires* resource.

Choosing a Campsite

This will depend on the type of camping you choose to do. You may be in an established campground where all camping spots are designated or in a primitive wilderness area. The following are general suggestions if you are tent camping:

If you have a choice, choose an established campsite in regular-use areas rather than trampling down a new spot. Set up your tent at least 15 feet from your campfire area and away from established trails. Camp at least 200 feet from lakes or streams to help protect the waters. You may want to set up away from other people since many people go camping to experience solitude, especially in wilderness areas.

Find a level spot and check the dirt to make sure it isn't a place where water pools or flows through when it rains. Areas of open ground surrounded by deposits of buoyant leaves and bark are a tell-tale sign. Also make sure that your groundcloth is covered by your tent and no part of it is sticking out from under it. If rain hits your groundcloth it may pool under your tent.

Avoid camping beneath large dead trees and branches that can come crashing down in strong winds. Camp above the high-water mark in canyon areas. Along rivers, stay beyond the reach of flash floods. Consider the benefits of receiving the morning sun, being shaded from the hot afternoon, potential windbreaks. Leave the site in better condition than you found it.

Food Etiquette

If you are planning on surviving in the wild, there are a few pieces of cookware that you won't want to be without. A basic set would include pots and pans, a spatula, mitts, a bag of coal or other fuel, a can opener, and a cooler. Many campgrounds supply grills, fire rings, and picnic tables. To begin with, you may want to make simple sandwiches, open a can of beans or soup, and bring plenty of pre-packaged foods. There are also some very delicious and nutritious freeze dried foods; the ice cream is fun to try!

If you are camping for more than a weekend, you'll need to thoroughly clean your dishes to avoid getting sick. Collect food scraps and residue from plates into a Ziploc bag. Heat up a pot of water with a few drops of biodegradable dish soap and scrub your dishes with the slightly soapy water. Pour the waste water through a strainer 100 feet away from the campsite. Put whatever is left in the strainer inside the Ziploc bag. Plan on packing out the bag of waste. Finally, dip your dishes in boiling water to sterilize them and remove the soap residue.

Before you leave your campsite in the morning, walk from one end of the campsite to the other looking for trash or any forgotten gear. Remember to follow Leave No Trace guidelines.

Food Safety with Wild Animals

If you will be camping where there are wild animals who may be interested in your food, you will need to prepare for that. The best way of keeping animals from coming into your tent is to not keep **any** food, or things that smell like food, in your tent. This includes candy bars! Keep all food in a sturdy container with a tight-fitting lid. If the container does not have a secure way to keep it closed, you may want to strap it shut or put some weight on it. If there are larger animals,

like bears, you will need to put food items in a bag and hang the bag from a tall tree out of their reach.

How to Camp

Most campgrounds offer sites for either tents or RVs. When traveling with kids, it is best to pick a place that offers many activities, such as fishing, swimming, hiking, and playgrounds. Decide what amenities are important to your family/group when choosing a place to stay, like clean restrooms, shower stalls, a general store, etc. Or your choice might be for more of a wilderness experience.

Knots

You can happily camp without knowing any knots, but they are an essential skill for pitching a tarp, wind-proofing a tent, hanging bear bags, or setting up clotheslines. Take the time to learn some basic knots before you head out. If you can only learn one knot, learn the taut-line hitch.

Staying warm at night

Staying warm is a fine art even with a good sleeping bag. Your sleeping bag will only insulate you in the places where it is fluffy because the stationary air inside the filler is what is doing the work. Lay out the sleeping bag and allow it to fluff up before you get into it. To use it most effectively, try to lie as straight and pencil-thin as you can and let it fluff up around you. If part of you is pressing up against the side of the bag, it will compact the filler in that spot leaving just two thin layers of nylon and the heat will leak out. It may feel warmest at first to curl up in a ball, but you'll end up colder in the middle of the night than if you lie out flat and suffer through the cold for the first few minutes.

You'll feel like bundling up in your warmest clothes, but if you have a good sleeping bag you'll find that you are warmest wearing a hat, socks, and as little else as is appropriate. You'll sweat throughout the night, and your sleeping bag breathes better than your clothes, letting it evaporate. Get a good sleeping bag and trust it, you'll wake up dry, warm, and comfortable instead of damp, cold, and sticky.

Safety

- Leave notice
- Stick together
- Know your limits
- Stay hydrated
- Stay dry and warm
- Beware of the sun
- Learn basic first aid
- Make rules

Extensions

Math: budgeting for equipment, food, etc.

Misc.: geography, winter camping, cooking (& altitude), weather unit, astrology

Resources

- Camping Safety. http://parentingtweens.suite101.com/article.cfm/camping_safety_basics
- History of Camping. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/91358/camping/1058/History>
- Leave No Trace: Camping and Hiking Ethics. <http://www.lnt.org/>