



# Camping 101

Taught by Jordan Sparrow

## Chapter 1 - Welcome to Camping 101

### ➤ Why Camp?

- **You get to explore your own backyard.** We oftentimes chose to vacation in far away places, but camping gives you the opportunity to keep it local and explore new places you tend to overlook.
- **Connect with Nature.** It doesn't matter if you are a first time camper or an experienced outdoor enthusiast, camping allows you to immerse yourself in nature and get away from the city.
- **Disconnect from technology and reconnect with your friends and family.** We all know how much technology controls our everyday lives, and leaving technology behind allows you to reconnect with your friends and family. Camping is great for families with kids



as well, it's an experience that they'll remember for the rest of their lives.

- **Affordability.** Camping can be extremely affordable compared to flying somewhere. You can design a trip based on any budget, starting at a bare-bones, food and gas money trip to a more luxurious glamping experience. Even if you chose to splurge on your camping trip, it's almost always going to be more affordable than flying somewhere.

## Chapter 2 - The Basics

### ➤ Different Types of Camping

- **Car Camping:** This type of camping is the easiest and most accessible because you are driving to your campsite, not hiking there. You'll pack everything you want to bring into your car, drive to your destination, and then pull up to the camp site that you likely booked in advance.
  - Great option for trips lasting longer than one night. The biggest pro here is your ability to bring whatever fits in your car.
  - The camp site should have all the basic needs and you don't have to worry about bathrooms, storing trash, and some of the nuances of hiking into a campsite.
  - Because you are driving and not hiking, it allows you quick and easy access. If you need to grab a few extra hot dogs from a corner store or need to run an unexpected errand, just hop in your car.
  - Having a car is also great in case you have an unexpected emergency.
  - Since you are staying in a communal campground, you won't be very isolated from other campers. If you're looking for complete detachment from society, car camping may not be



best for you.

- **Dispersed Camping:**

- Dispersed camping means you will be camping outside of a designated campground. A local agency (such as the Bureau of Land Management) designates land within state or national forests where dispersed camping is allowed
- You won't find any potable water or trash services. You also won't have access to a fire ring or picnic table. If you are car camping, you would simply park your car along the road and set up your campsite wherever you please.
- dispersed camping feels like more of an immersive experience in nature. You will likely encounter other dispersed campers near you, but you have the option to spread out more and be more secluded if that's what you are looking for.
- You cannot reserve a dispersed camping spot, it's always first come first serve. If you are planning on camping during a busy holiday weekend, it could take you quite a while to find a spot, so you need to arrive early and be patient.

- **Backcountry Camping**

- If this is your first time camping, I do not recommend backpacking.
- You'll have to be totally self-sufficient and bring everything you need including water. You are also expected to pack out all of your waste, both trash and human waste.
- You'll have to be more aware of the weather, animals you may encounter, and certain safety elements that wouldn't be relevant if you were staying at a designated campsite.
- You are truly choosing your own adventure. It's just you, your survival know-how, and whatever is in your pack.

➤ **Finding a Spot**

- How to Book



- Your best friend for finding a campsite is going to be the internet.
- My number one online campsite resource is The Dyrty. (<https://thedyrt.com/>) This site is my go-to for finding great camping spots. You can find both campsites that are reservable online as well as locations where dispersed camping is available. It will give you information on how to book, how to get there, pricing, amenities, camper reviews and more.
- Recreation.gov. This is a government site that will show you all the registered public and private camping spots across the US, and provide fairly detailed info on pricing, how to book and details of the camp sites.
- Hipcamp. Hipcamp is kind of like the Airbnb for camping... in a world of crappy camping websites, they have managed to make a beautiful site that is really easy to navigate.
- My advice is to book in advance and get there early. Good camp spots book up quickly, especially on weekends and holidays.

➤ **Gear: Outerwear and Backpacks**

- What we covered in the videos are the bare minimum of what you need to have a successful camping experience. However there are some more items we would recommend if you have the budget to spend a little more money. In return you will have increased comfort and convenience.
- **Layers** - Each layer of clothing has a specific function and will allow you to pack lighter and stay comfortable as the weather changes. So let's look at the three different types of clothing layers:
  - **Base layer:** These are your tshirts, or underwear or light materials that rest on your body and whose job it is to wick sweat away and insulate you.
  - **Middle layer:** These are jackets or sweaters meant to retain body heat and protect you from the cold. As a general rule, the thicker or puffier the jacket, the better it is at keeping heat in.



- **Outer Shell:** These are rain coats and jackets that are designed to keep you dry and protect you from wind and rain.
- **Shoes** - You want to get a pair of shoes that are comfortable and provide ample support. I'd recommend a pair of day-hiking shoes or a pair of trail runners. Overall you'll want to choose a shoe that will stand up to the terrain and duration of activity you will be using them for.
  - If you are going to be hiking through wet or rainy conditions, there are a variety of waterproof sprays and coatings you can apply to your shoes that will keep them dry.
- **Pants** - Choose something that is durable but flexible. Athletic shorts or leggings are great for warmer weather. A comfortable pair of jeans are great for cooler weather. If it will be wet, consider a pants that is waterproof.
- **Waterproof Jacket** - A rain jacket is one of those things that you should always bring just in case. Waterproof and breathable are key. You want a jacket that blocks rain and wind, but still lets you sweat without feeling like you're wearing a plastic bag.
- **Hat** - A hat is pretty self explanatory, but if you're going to be in the sun all day a hat will keep the sun off your face and keep you cool. Bring a beanie to wear during cool nights.
- **Backpacks** - As we talk about packs, we are going to limit our recommendations to bags that you would need for an overnight backpacking trip. If you are going car camping, you won't need a heavy-duty hiking backpack meant to hold tents, sleeping bags and cooking materials.
  - **Waist Straps** - Get a bag that has waist straps built in. These waist support straps are crucial for a comfortable day of hiking. They provide ergonomic support and will help evenly distribute the weight of your pack to your hips.
  - **Size** - 60 liters+ When looking for a bag, you need to make sure it's big enough for all your equipment: a tent, sleeping bag, cooking supplies, food, clothes, etc. That's why I recommend getting a bag that is no smaller than 60



liters in size. Most camping bags range from 60-70 liters and the bigger the bag the more you can bring.

- **Pockets** - When I look for a bag, I'm always looking for one that has lots of pockets. Having a variety of pockets allows you to access things with ease and means you won't have to constantly dig through your bag for little things.

➤ **Gear: Tents and Sleeping Bags**

- There are a couple key metrics to look for when picking the tent that's right for you.
- **Season Rating** - The first thing is season rating. There are three main types of tents: a 3 season tent, a 4 season tent, and a hybrid 3 to 4 season tent.
  - A 3 season tent is meant for adventures in three seasons: Spring, Summer, and Fall.
  - A 4 season tent is for year round camping.
  - The 3 to 4 season hybrid tent falls in between and can do all 4 seasons minus some extreme weather conditions.
- **Size** - The next key metric is size. Basically, how many people do you want to fit in your tent and do you want to be able to stand-up inside it.
  - For size, pick a tent that will sleep the number of people you'll need. It's usually going to be a tight squeeze no matter what, so don't underestimate your size needs.
  - If you're a taller or larger person, air on the side of extra space. And if you're a single camper I think you should still go for a two person tent vs a single person tent. Going bigger will give you more room and it won't add much in weight.
- **Style** - There are essentially two types of tents: the classic domed tent and a cabin style tent which has more straight up and down walls.
  - The benefit of a cabin style tent is living space. It allows you to stand up more freely and is great for families or campers who are bringing their dogs along.
  - Overall I think the dome style tent is best for dealing with the elements. They are lighter and more aerodynamic.



Cabin style tents are meant for more casual camping and great for trips with the whole family.

- **Sleeping Bag and Pad** - Picking the correct bag is essential to ensure you get a good night sleep
  - Classic **Rectangular** sleeping bags allow plenty of room to stretch out and are great for car camping and situations where you don't need to worry about weight and size.
  - The **Semi Rectangular** and **Mummy** bags are more geared towards backpackers. These are meant to be lighter, fit more snug, and pack small.
- Here are some things to think about when buying a sleeping bag.
  - **Weight** - Check out a few different bags in person to find one that is both comfortable and fits your space and weight limitations. Regardless of what type of camping you do, lighter is always better.
  - **Warmth** - Each sleeping bag comes with a temperature rating. If a sleeping bag is rated at 0 degrees fahrenheit, this means that you will be warm and comfortable in weather above that temperature.
    - When thinking about warmth, you'll want to go for a sleeping bag that can handle temperatures LOWER than the coldest night you'll experience on your trip.
    - For warm weather bags, you'll want a bag that is rated for 30 degrees fahrenheit and up. Warm weather bags will usually be a bit thinner, lighter and are great for summer-time and warmer weather camping.
  - **Material** - Most sleeping bags are filled with either synthetic or down.
    - Down sleeping bags are filled with feathers, while synthetic bags use a puffy foam-like material.
    - The main difference between the two is that a down bag will usually pack smaller and weigh less than a synthetic sleeping bag.
- **Sleeping Pad** - Once you choose your sleeping bag, you'll need to choose a sleeping pad. Sleeping on the ground is uncomfortable,



- **Inflatable pads** pack smaller and in my opinion are more comfortable. The downside to an inflatable pad is you always run the risk of springing an unexpected leak thanks to a rock or twig on the ground. All inflatable pads come with a patch kit, so make sure to bring it with you just in case!
- **Foam pads** are great for people who prefer a more firm sleeping surface. They are more bulky, but never spring a leak! At the end of the day, you will be more comfortable using either type of sleeping pad, so it all boils down to your preference and price range.

## Chapter 3 - Once You Arrive

### ➤ Setting Up Camp

- Before setting up, it's important to walk through your entire site. This will help you determine the best place to set up your tent. When picking a spot for your tent, you need to make sure it's flat and on a durable surface.
- Finding a flat spot allows for more comfortable sleeping, make sure to brush away any rocks or sticks that could poke through your tent. This could potentially pop a sleeping pad in the middle of the night!
- Your tent should be at least 20 feet away from a fire ring, ideally a bit farther. If you are camping near a water source like a lake, pond or stream, make sure you are at least 50 feet away from the water, this allows wildlife to access water at any time. Plus, tides can rise throughout the day and you don't want to deal with a flooded tent.
- If you are in an established site that already has a fire ring, great! If not, you'll have to make one with rocks.
  - A fire ring should be in an open space with at least 12 feet of airspace free of any tree limbs or obstructions.





- The ring should be about the width of a tire and about 10-12 inches tall. Simply place rocks next to each other until you have a nice ring.
- Keep some small gaps between rocks as this will allow air to feed the fire, which is important in order to get a fire going.
- Always make sure you have water with you to extinguish the fire. It should be cool to the touch after dousing it in water, so make sure you have plenty of water.

➤ **Building a Fire**

- Never leave a fire unattended. Never! You don't want to be that person on the news responsible for starting a forest fire.
- It's also important to bring your own firewood so you don't deplete local wood that plants and wildlife depend on. Make sure the wood is locally sourced, this slows down the spread of invasive insects such as the asian pine beetle which destroys thousands of acres of trees a year.
- How to build a fire -
  - Collect tinder - dry grass, pine needles, newspaper, or some greasy potato chips if you're in a pinch
  - Collect small sticks that will burn quickly
  - Collect kindling - medium sized sticks to build your fire.
  - Large firewood that you brought with you
  - Build a log cabin outside a teepee
  - Light, feed fire closely, blow on it to troubleshoot.

➤ **Cooking**

- Cooking looks a lot different if you are car camping or backpacking.
  - Backpacking.
    - Dehydrated meals like these are the way to go. These are super lightweight and take up almost no room in your pack, and most of them are actually pretty delicious. They are available at almost any outdoor gear store.
    - The one key ingredient you'll need is hot water, which means you'll also need to bring a portable



stove. These backpacking stoves are super lightweight, quick and easy to use.

- Bringing along a portable water filter is also a great idea - this means you will have to carry less water on your pack, but it also means that you will need to choose a hike with access to a water source.
  - Lastly, you'll need a mess kit, which usually includes a bowl and spork. In addition to dehydrated meals, you should bring some of your favorite snacks. Choose snacks that can be put in baggies and won't break, this will free up a lot of room in your pack.
- Car Camping allows you the freedom to bring much more. Here is a short list of some things you may want to include on your packing list while car camping.
- Stove and fuel
  - Matches/light/firestarter
  - Cook pots (and pot holder)
  - Frying pan
  - Eating utensils
  - Cooking utensils
  - Bottle opener, can opener, corkscrew
  - Sharp knife
  - Plates/bowls
  - Mugs/cups
  - Cutting board
  - Cooler
  - Ice or ice substitutes
  - Water bottles
  - Camp sink or wash bins
  - Biodegradable soap
  - Pot scrubber/sponge(s)
  - Trash/recycling bags
  - Dish towel
  - Coffee Maker
  - Tongs for roasting marshmallows



- If you are camping at an established site, you will likely have access to a picnic table. If you are dispersed camping, I suggest bringing a folding table.
- Having a cooler allows you to bring many different types of food and also allows you to do some meal prep in your own kitchen before you leave.
- It's important to plan out your meals a few days in advance. If you are camping with a group, planning your meals together is a great idea and also helps split the burden of cooking.
  - There are hundreds of recipes out there specifically geared towards camping, so it's worth checking out a few blogs out there to get some inspiration for what meals you will want to eat.
- Storing your food properly while camping is very important both for your safety and the wellbeing of wildlife.
  - When you aren't preparing food, it should be kept inside your car or in a bear proof container, far away from your tent. This helps keep the scent of the food mostly contained meaning critters will be less likely to come through your campsite. Don't bring food in your tent at night - the small piece of nylon that separates you from the outdoors means nothing to a hungry animal.
  - It's also a good idea to keep lotion, deodorant, sunscreen or anything that has a strong fragrance inside your car or bear bag. Animals have a very keen sense of smell and are very curious.

## Chapter 4 - Leave No Trace and Safety

### ➤ Leave No Trace

- There are seven principles to leaving no trace, which the Center for Outdoor Ethics has compiled to give us concrete ways to minimize our impact.
  - **Plan ahead and prepare.** Before you even get outside, minimizing your impact on nature begins at home. Planning



ahead looks different for every adventure, but here are some examples of planning ahead that I use all the time.

- Check local regulations.
  - Is there a fire ban in place?
  - Do dogs need to be kept on a leash?
  - The rules that local authorities enforce are there to protect people as well as nature, so make sure you abide by them.
- **Travel and camp on durable surfaces.** Always make sure that you are aware of the ground below you. Part of keeping nature unspoiled is ensuring that we stay on marked trails and roads at all times.
- Durable surfaces are pretty easy to spot - think trails, established campsites and service roads. Rock, sand, gravel, ice and snow (although temporary) are super durable!
  - Avoid soft, marshy and muddy areas. These are spaces where plants thrive and grow, so let's let mother nature do her work here.
  - Watch where you walk or set up camp to avoid stepping on living soil, or cryptobiotic crust (sometimes called just "crypto"). This is very common in desert environments and is made up of many living organisms that plants and wildlife depend on. It's extremely fragile and stepping on it can destroy it.
- **Dispose of waste properly.** Waste is more than just trash, it also encompasses human waste and liquid waste. "Pack it in, pack it out" is what you need to remember here.
- Bring a trash bag to dispose of all waste. Be sure to separate garbage, recycling and compost.
  - Always use a toilet or latrine when possible. If you can't access sanitary services, you should bury your human waste in what's known as a cat hole.
    - Find an area that's at least 200 feet away from campsites, trails or water sources that isn't frequented by people.



- Dig a hole that's about 8 inches deep, do your business and bury it.
  - You can bury toilet paper if it's plain and unscented.
- Feminine hygiene products, baby wipes, diapers, etc. cannot be buried and should be thrown away with the rest of your waste.
- Waste water from dishes and bathing needs special attention also. If possible, use natural biodegradable soap. Make sure that all wastewater is disposed of at least 200 feet away from any water source in the ground. This helps keep soap and other pollutants out of water sources.
- **Leave what you find.** It may be tempting to move things around, or take a souvenir home with you, but remember to always leave nature as you found it.
  - Don't pick flowers, take home pine cones or small plants. Both plants and animals depend greatly on their surroundings.
  - Let others experience a sense of discovery. If you come across deer antlers, petrified wood or cultural artifacts leave them there so someone else can "discover" them and have that feeling that they have connected with nature.
- **Minimize campfire impacts.** This is extremely important not just for conservation, but for your safety. When building a fire, always keep in mind the following:
  - Should I even build a fire? If it's windy and you are surrounded by dry vegetation, you could be putting yourself at great risk to start a forest fire.
  - Is there a fire ban in place? If so, you can face hefty fines for starting even a small fire. This can also include smoking!
  - Always use an existing fire ring if possible. If you need to create one, make sure it's small, away from



any fire hazards and well constructed with plenty of rocks.

- Keep the fire small and always bring your own firewood, plants and critters also depend on kindling to survive.
  - NEVER LEAVE A FIRE UNATTENDED! Don't be that person you see on the news who started a wildfire.
  - Always make sure to thoroughly extinguish your fire. It should be cool to the touch and can require lots of water. Hot coals can easily reignite, so it's a good idea to turn coals and douse them with water from several angles.
- **Respect wildlife.** Encountering wildlife can be an amazing and life changing experience. Always keep in mind that we are guests in the natural habitat of animals, so we need to respect their space.
- Quiet observation is best. Don't make any quick movements that could startle the wildlife. Quick movements and loud noises are stressful to wildlife and could also potentially put you in danger.
  - Don't ever feed wildlife. Make sure food at campsites is always stored away safely - in your car or a bear proof container. Dispose of food in the garbage, don't throw it in the wilderness. Certain foods can be harmful to animal health.
- **Be considerate of other visitors.** The great outdoors belongs to everyone, and here are some simple suggestions to implement while interacting with others.
- Share the trail, let others pass. You may encounter bikers or horses on a trail, so it's always important to be aware of your surroundings.
  - Keep the volume down. Have fun and enjoy yourself, but be conscious of your noise level.
  - Embrace differences - people from all socioeconomic backgrounds, cultures and different walks of life



enjoy the outdoors, and it's our responsibility to create an environment of inclusion.

- There is no one "correct way" to enjoy the outdoors, so don't shame people for doing things differently.

➤ **Safety**

- **Always tell a friend or family member where you are going and when you are expected to be back.**
  - Many times you won't have phone service while camping, so having someone know where you are and when you plan on coming back will allow them to seek help if you don't come back when expected.
  - Travel in small groups, that way if something does happen to you, another person can seek help.
- **Bring a basic first aid kit.** Don't overlook this one, even if you are going glamping.
  - Being prepared for the smaller injuries such as cuts, bruises, insect bites and sunburn will allow you to enjoy yourself more if you do get a minor injury. We've included a list of what you should include in a basic first aid kit in the PDF.
- **Know your limits and respect them.** Pushing your limits can cause unexpected injuries. Even if you don't get injured, pushing your limits is exhausting and you won't enjoy yourself as much as you could have.
- **Respect wildlife.** Depending on where you are camping, you can easily encounter dangerous wildlife.
  - If you are in bear country, bring bear spray with you. If you encounter a bear, stand your ground and don't turn away from the bear. Make as much noise as possible by yelling or banging pots and pans. Make yourself look as big as you can by spreading your arms or a coat out.
    - Depending on where you are camping, you could encounter black or grizzly bears, which have distinct safety protocols. Do some research about what types of bears are in your area and read up on what to do in the rare case of an attack.



- Safety information about dangerous wildlife in the area is almost always posted in campsites.
- Moose can be very dangerous if provoked and are responsible for more conflicts with humans than bears.
  - If you come across a moose, stay calm and slowly walk away. If the moose hasn't detected you, keep it that way. If it has seen you, talk to it slowly and walk away.
  - A moose will only charge you if it perceives a threat, so stay calm and slowly create distance between you and the animal.
  - Unlike bears, it's okay to run away from a moose. If you feel the moose is about to charge, seek shelter behind a big object such as a tree or car.
- Mountain lions are elusive creatures that rarely attack, but here's what you need to keep in mind if you do encounter one. **Do not run.** A mountain lion is much quicker than you and could stimulate the lion's instinct to attack.
  - Stand up, appear large and make eye contact. Do not crouch down (which will make you appear like a four legged animal) and always try to appear as large as possible, which will deter the lion in most cases.
  - If attacked, fight back with rocks, sticks or whatever you can, making sure to stay on your feet.
- Raccoons, possums, skunks and other small critters are more of a nuisance than a threat, but they do have the ability to spread disease. Safely storing your food is really all you need to do here to avoid interactions.
- **Don't play around with fire.** I can't stress enough the importance of fire safety. Build fires responsibly, never leave them unattended and always put out your fire until it's cool to the touch.
- **Trust your instincts.** You know yourself best, so make sure to listen. If something doesn't feel right, there's probably something wrong.



