

Camping Holidays

Family holidays and hotels don't always go together as the kids like to let off steam. It's better to be flexible when you have children and camping holidays suit many families. You can have a meal when you want and the kids can make friends with other kids on the campsite. No one minds a bit of noise, as long as they are tucked up in bed at a reasonable hour.

If you get bored, then it's just a matter of decamping and moving on to somewhere else. Children like to be given some responsibility and it teaches them self-reliance to be given basic tasks to do. They could fetch the water, help to cook a simple meal or organize games to keep younger siblings entertained.

In my home country of England, campsites tend to be a bit rough and ready. You may find one on the corner of a field that a farmer uses. The farmer's wife may sell milk, eggs, bacon, bread and butter. If there are any toilet facilities, they will be basic. The more commercial campsites with their own tents have better facilities and there may be a shop or a children's playground. Perhaps they have improved, but ones I visited years ago did nothing to encourage camping holidays. The toilet block was dark and dingy and there was nowhere to wash or dry clothes.

My family and I went to France with our two young children. The campsites there were excellent. The toilet block was very clean and well lit and all the facilities were top rate. The tents themselves were spacious and had everything a family could wish for on camping holidays. The kids had a great time and the adults; mostly British, Dutch and German organized inter tent boules competitions. When the kids went to bed, exhausted and happy, the adults got the wine from the cool box and chatted and relaxed. We even babysat for each other so we could go into town and have a meal.

The children had their own courier, who would take them off for a nature walk or do some painting with them. Each tent had a barbecue outside and we used to slap on steaks and burgers. The bread man came every day to the site, selling freshly baked baguettes and croissants. Of course, sunshine always makes camping holidays go better and this was reason enough to give up on camping in rainy England. A coffee and a croissant in the sun is a much better way to start the day!