

FIRST-TIME CAMPING CHECKLIST

Plan, pack, set up camp and head home safely.

1. BEFORE YOU RESERVE

- ☐ Choose a beginner-friendly campground with easy vehicle access.
- ☐ Check for drinking water, restrooms, a picnic table and a fire ring.
- ☐ Review campsite size, vehicle limits, pet rules and check-in/check-out times.
- ☐ Reserve the campsite in advance when possible.
- ☐ Save campground directions and reservation details for offline access.

2. BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

- ☐ Check daytime temperatures, overnight lows, rain, wind and weather alerts.
- ☐ Tell a trusted person where you are camping and when you expect to return.
- ☐ Confirm current campground rules and fire restrictions.
- ☐ Set up your tent at home and verify poles, stakes, rainfly and other parts.
- ☐ Plan simple meals and prepare or portion ingredients at home.
- ☐ Charge phones, lights, power banks and other rechargeable equipment.

3. SHELTER & SLEEPING

- ☐ Tent appropriate for the number of campers and expected conditions.
- ☐ Tent stakes, guylines and rainfly.
- ☐ Groundsheet or tent footprint.
- ☐ Sleeping bag appropriate for expected overnight temperatures.
- ☐ Sleeping pad, insulated air mattress or camping mattress.
- ☐ Pillow and extra blanket if conditions warrant.

4. CLOTHING & WEATHER

- ☐ Layered clothing for changing temperatures.
- ☐ Rain jacket and other rain protection.
- ☐ Extra socks and underwear.
- ☐ Comfortable hiking or camp footwear.
- ☐ Warm hat, sun hat and gloves as conditions require.
- ☐ Dry clothing reserved for sleeping if wet weather is possible.

5. COOKING, FOOD & WATER

- ☐ Portable camp stove and appropriate fuel where permitted.
- ☐ Cookware, utensils, plates/bowls and cups.
- ☐ Cooler with sufficient ice or cold packs for perishable food.
- ☐ Simple meals, snacks and easy breakfast foods.
- ☐ Enough drinking water for the trip or a reliable treatment method.
- ☐ Reusable water bottles or containers.
- ☐ Trash bags, paper towels and basic cleanup supplies.

Safety: Never operate a fuel-burning stove inside a tent, vehicle or enclosed sleeping area.

6. LIGHTING & CAMP COMFORT

- ☐ Headlamp or flashlight for each camper.
- ☐ Camp lantern for general campsite lighting.
- ☐ Spare batteries or charging equipment.
- ☐ Camp chairs or other portable seating.
- ☐ Book, cards, games or another simple activity.
- ☐ Utility cord for appropriate lightweight camp tasks.

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7. SAFETY & FIRST AID

- ☐ First-aid kit and knowledge of how to use it.
- ☐ Personal medications and essential medical items.
- ☐ Sunscreen and insect repellent.
- ☐ Map or campground information.
- ☐ Phone and emergency contact information.
- ☐ Whistle or other simple signaling device.
- ☐ Know the campground name, access road and nearest help location.

8. FOOD & WILDLIFE SAFETY

- ☐ Learn the campground's specific food-storage requirements.
- ☐ Secure food, garbage, toiletries and other scented items as required.
- ☐ Keep raw meat separated from ready-to-eat food.
- ☐ Keep perishable food properly chilled.
- ☐ Never intentionally feed wildlife.
- ☐ Clean cooking and eating areas after meals.

9. WHEN YOU ARRIVE

- ☐ Arrive with enough daylight to set up without rushing.
- ☐ Check the site for drainage problems and overhead hazards.
- ☐ Set up the tent and sleeping system first.
- ☐ Organize cooking, food-storage and lighting areas.
- ☐ Locate restrooms, water sources and campground exits.
- ☐ Keep important items in consistent, easy-to-find locations.

10. CAMPFIRE & LEAVE NO TRACE

- ☐ Confirm fires are currently permitted before lighting one.
- ☐ Use established fire rings where required.
- ☐ Never leave a fire unattended.
- ☐ Completely extinguish the fire according to local guidance.
- ☐ Pack out trash, food scraps and anything else you brought.
- ☐ Avoid damaging vegetation; use established campsites and trails.

11. BEFORE BED

- ☐ Secure food, garbage and scented items.
- ☐ Put away cooking equipment.
- ☐ Keep shoes, warm clothing, medications and a headlamp accessible.
- ☐ Check weather conditions if service is available.
- ☐ Make sure the campsite is organized before sleep.

12. BREAKING CAMP

- ☐ Clean the cooking and eating area.
- ☐ Pack gear systematically and check for forgotten items.
- ☐ Dry wet equipment when possible; fully dry it after returning home.
- ☐ Walk the entire campsite before leaving.
- ☐ Pick up small trash and leave the site at least as clean as you found it.

FIRST TRIP RULE: KEEP IT SIMPLE.

Good shelter. Warm sleep. Simple food. Safe water. Basic lighting. First aid. A little preparation.

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