

YOUR GUIDE TO TENT CAMPING

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

20 TOP
TIPS

from the Camping and Caravanning Club
to help you camp smarter

So you're thinking of getting started in – or returning to – tent camping for your holidays. The Club produces lots of great advice on the different types of tent, how to choose which is right for your needs, and guidance on the choice of materials for your tent fabric, poles, groundsheet and pegs – simply visit myccc.co.uk/datasheets. We've also got top tips on pitching and maintaining your tent at myccc.co.uk/newtotents. So in this guide, we've set out to round up all the tips and advice you need to make sure your tent camping holidays go smoothly. Read on for everything you need to know about your next tent camping adventure but were afraid to ask.

A QUICK REMINDER OF THE FOUR MAIN AREAS OF TENT CAMPING IS IN THE WORD **TENT(S)** ITSELF:

T IS FOR TENTS

01 BACK TO BASICS



When you've acquired your tent - new, pre-owned or borrowed - check it over thoroughly for tears and breaks. Do a trial pitch in the garden or another local green space, to make sure nothing is missing or damaged.

02 PEGGING IT



Make sure the pegs are clean and in reasonable condition. If your tent comes with just basic metal pin-style pegs you may want to take some other types too, such as those designed for harder ground.

03 SEAMS GOOD



Take a look at the seams in the fabric. Do they appear watertight? If not, consider re-doing them with an appropriate sealant.

04 WELL FRAMED



As you pitch it will probably become obvious if there are any problems with the tent frame, whether poles or air tubes. Duct tape and a few spare sections of pole or tube can often save the day.

05 WEATHER THE WEATHER

Cotton or polycotton tents may need to be weathered to keep the rain out. Pitch the tent outside and gently run water over it to soak all the flysheet fabric. The fibres should swell and seal any leaks. Leave it to dry thoroughly before packing away.

06 KEEP IT CLEAN



It's always best to clean a tent before you pack it away, but if yours is still a bit mucky, take a look at myccc.co.uk/datasheets, Data Sheet #11 Looking after your tent for plenty of tips to improve things.

07 TAKE A TOOL KIT



A small tool kit with a few spare parts can make the difference between a quick fix and an afternoon spent searching for a solution. Consider taking self-adhesive fabric patches, a spare pole or tube, guy line, seam sealer, beeswax for zips, duct tape and a multi-tool. As part of your kit, carry a fire bucket. A fire bucket filled with water can save a tent if it catches fire and many people like to keep one outside their tent. A fire blanket or extinguisher can be useful for cooking fires. Always get everyone out of the tent before tackling a fire.

IS FOR EATING

08 SAFETY FIRST

Never use a fuel-burning appliance (such as a gas stove or barbecue) in your tent, unless there is a specific area designed for it. Apart from the dangers of fire, without enough ventilation there's the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning, see myccc.co.uk/COsafety.

09 SERVING SUGGESTION

You can use your normal crockery and cutlery from home but many prefer a lightweight, robust set of plates. Cheap plastic picnic wear often can't cope with hot food and drink so look for plates, bowls and cutlery designed for full meals.

10 STOVE TOP



Your cooking equipment will depend on how much catering you're planning. A single-burner gas stove is great for a quick cuppa but you may prefer at least two burners to prepare family dinners. Barbecues such as the Cobb or those from Cadac can be surprisingly flexible for camp cooking too. And don't forget the fuel and lighter, if needed.

11 COOKING KIT



There are some great nesting saucepan sets and even collapsible kettles aimed at the tent camper, but make sure they are large enough for the cooking you're planning. It's also easy to take some from home, though they may be a bit heavier. Similarly, a small set of basic kitchen cupboard staples such as seasonings is useful. And don't forget a can opener. A sharp knife and a basic chopping board should suffice – unless creative cookery is a much-loved part of your holiday experience.

12 KEEPING COOL



Many campers like to take a cool box or even a fridge to store fresh food and drink safely. There's a wide variety available with insulation of varying effectiveness. Many campsites will freeze cold blocks for you if you're staying for a while.

13 THE KITCHEN SINK



Even if you are using campsites with a full facility block, it's worth taking a bowl. It's useful for washing up, washing yourself or simply transporting stuff to the washing up area. You can upgrade this to a full camping kitchen if space and budget allows.

14 AROUND THE TABLE



You can sit on the groundsheet or grass, but for longer stays it's more comfortable to take chairs and a table. Check their respective heights if you want to use them for dining.

N IS FOR NIGHT TIME

15 SOMETHING TO SLEEP ON AND IN



There are a wide range of beds for camping, from an ultra-lightweight inflatable mat to a full-size camp bed, with self-inflating mats (SIMs) and airbeds in between. Find one that fits your camping style, tent and you. Pop an insulating mat or silvered blanket on top if it's extra cold.

On top of this, your domestic duvet or sheet and blankets will be fine but can be cumbersome, so many campers use a sleeping bag. These come in many forms, in shape, weight and ability to keep you warm. Choose carefully and take care to read the manufacturer's recommendations for use and storage so it keeps in top condition. And don't forget the pillows.

16 SHINE A LIGHT



Many campers swear by the head torch to illuminate tasks around camp, though it's a great way of temporarily blinding your companions in conversation. Consider how you will spend darker evenings. Will you be happy congregating around a central table light or does everyone need his or her own torch for reading?

T IS FOR TOILETRIES

17 WATER WATER EVERYWHERE



It's useful to have a fresh water carrier. Ideally it will have a tap and stand on a table for convenience, but a basic container that can be sealed to keep muck out is fine.

18 YOUR OWN TOILET BLOCK

Many campsites have facility blocks with hot showers, toilets, laundry facilities and more. Others have just a fresh water tap and waste disposal. If you like the more basic style or prefer not to share facilities, you can take your own. We have a Data Sheet dedicated to this, #8 Choosing portable toilet and washing gear for camping at sites without facilities. Find it at myccc.co.uk/datasheets.

S IS FOR (EXTRA) STUFF

19 PLUGGING IN



If you can't exist without plug-in electrical appliances you may like to take an electric hook-up lead. Pitches with hook-up points cost more than standard ones, but allow you to use domestic-style 230V electrics in your tent. Make sure your mobile hook-up unit is designed for use outdoors and check out our safety information at myccc.co.uk/datasheets Data Sheet #35 Using electricity in your tent.

20 YOUR HOLIDAY KIT



Everyone has a different idea of what's vital on holiday. A few changes of clothes, washing kit and a first aid kit will probably come high on the list, but you may also want to take photography equipment, toys for youngsters, board games for rainy days or anything else to bring your holiday to life.

Your local camping retailer will be stacked with stuff you might like to take with you, from reclining chairs that match your tent to gas-powered showers and from collapsible whisks to espresso machines. We'd recommend you try some basic camping first, before investing in too much kit. You'll soon work out what's really 'essential'. And yes, that might include the espresso machine.