

Money \$aving tips and tricks for the perfect family camping trip

By Heather Cherry

Camping season is right around the corner! Long summer days, muggy nights underneath the stars, grilling burgers and roasting marshmallows over the fire warrant lifelong memories. Are you eager to plan a family camping trip that is memorable and affordable?

Check out these money savings tips and tricks for the perfect family camping trip:

Compare prices – Campground pricing varies based on location; especially if the campground is beachfront, high-end or near a popular attraction. Pricing per lot will vary based on location in the campground, size and what connections are offered.

State and local parks are often more affordable and usually equipped with fire rings, cooking grills and lots of activities. (dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/StateParkPrices/Pages/default.aspx)

If you aren't persistent about camping on a specific day, compare other days of the week to complement your budget. Prices peak on weekends and major holidays. Usually weekdays are less expensive and less crowded.

Interested in volunteering on your camping trip? Some campgrounds offer a 'workamping' opportunity volunteering your time in exchange for free access to the grounds.

Make a master list – A positive camping experience starts with preparation. Make a master list at least a week in advance. Think about what equipment you have versus what you need.

Buy supplies on clearance or during a sale at your local sporting goods store.

Avoid buying cheap items if possible. You don't need to sacrifice quality if you're camping on a budget. Instead, borrow or rent items from family and friends.

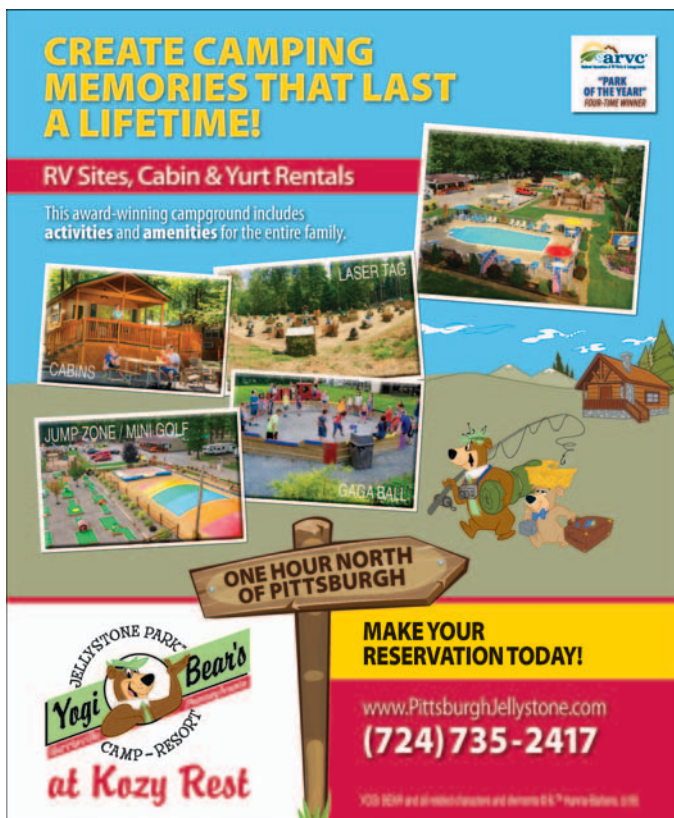
Plan Meals – One of the most expensive mistakes when camping with your family is forgetting to meal plan. Resulting in overpriced packaged meals or purchasing food at the campground's general store.

Make a list of items and shop at your local grocery store before heading to camp. This helps save money by avoiding

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impulsive buys, but also time since you won't have to shop once you get there.

Looking to cut costs significantly? Choose reusable plates, cups and silverware instead of disposable. Bonus – you'll save the planet. If you're camping in a remote location, buy items in bulk at a warehouse club store like Sam's Club or Costco.

Decide on activities before your trip – Many campgrounds are jam packed with fun and affordable things to do such as hiking trails, biking paths, fishing spots or swimming holes. Other fun and inexpensive activities include geocaching for treasure seekers and stargazing for astronomy enthusiasts.

Don't forget to pack a deck of cards and board games if rain is in the forecast.

Plan for the unexpected – Hopefully your camping trip will go off without a hitch but planning for the unexpected helps avoid costly last-minute necessities.

Most campground general stores have items available for purchase, but often at a marked-up price. Instead, pack a first aid kit from items at home.

Camping first aid checklist:

- Bandages
- Gauze
- Antiseptic cream
- Super glue
- Sterile wipes
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Aloe
- Eye drops
- Medicine – pain, allergies or bee stings
- Bug spray
- Duct tape ■



Heather Cherry is a freelance writer and mom from Renfrew.

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