

Camping Tips

We will be Fall camping in the mountains, so be prepared for a full range of temperatures - well, its doubtful we have to worry about the 80's or 90's. One year a half gallon of water froze solid overnight. Admittedly, only five of us braved the elements that year, but we still had a good time.

Clothing:

Don't forget the warm gloves/mittens, a warm hat as well as heavy socks, and spares. Keeping your hands, feet, and head warm in chilly weather is very important, especially your head, as you lose a lot of heat from your head. Keeping hands and feet dry will go a long way to keeping them warm so change out of damp clothes as soon as possible. There is a washer and dryer at the campground.

Layering is always a good cool weather technique and some good long johns can feel good when you are lingering around the campground. Fleece is a wonderful layering fabric. We will have the campfire going from late afternoon, into the night, but that tends to warm one side at a time - if you are close enough. A good heavy coat may feel good sitting around the campfire, depending on what temperatures we have.

For riding, layering is a must. This time of year, even with favorable weather, you generally have a large temperature variation from morning to afternoon. Arm warmers, tights, light wicking undershirts, both long and short sleeve jerseys if you have them are good. I prefer to have tights without padding and put them over my bike shorts so I can pull them off as it gets warm. Leg warmers are another option. A wind proof jacket/vest is something you want to bring, but might not need. A head scarf, balaclava or something similar to wear under your helmet to keep your head and ears warm from the chilly air can make a real difference in comfort, especially when first starting out. A little heavier socks and even shoe covers might be handy on a chilly morning ride.

Shelter:

Let me first say, **bike cleats and tent floors do not mix well**. Put your biking shoes on outside the tent, after you are sure you have everything you need from the tent. Just make it one of the last things you do before getting on the bike.

If you are not going to be back or bike packing, or 4 season camping, then I would get a tent with a 5-6 ft center height so you don't have to dress laying down. If this may be the only time you camp, see about borrowing a tent, rather than purchasing a tent. Adequate tents are available in the 120 dollar range. I've used Eureka four pole tents for years and I usually camp 12-15 times a year.

You will want a waterproof ground cloth to put under the tent to provide protection for the floor and an extra moisture barrier. The ground cloth should be smaller than the tent footprint. You don't want water running off the tent and onto the ground cloth and back under you tent between the tent and ground cloth. I use an even smaller plastic sheet inside the tent for extra protection of the floor. In addition to providing extra protection to the integrity of the tent floor, it keeps mud off the tent fabric. It is important that this layer be smaller than the ground cloth, or it will wick moisture thru the tent fabric.

I throw away the plastic pegs that come with most tents and buy the inexpensive metal pegs that look like large nails. They are indistructable and are easy to drive and take out. Rocks and gravel quickly destroy the plastic pegs. Since I'm car camping the slight increase in weight isn't an issue. Save the plastic pegs for back/bikepacking, where weight is an issue.

Food:

First, this is bear country. **DO NOT HAVE FOOD IN YOUR TENT**. It is even recommended to keep toothpaste out of the tent. If you spill food on your clothes, put them in the car after you change. Don't leave them in the tent.

Don't forget to bring a supply of your preferred biking nutrition products. The nearest supply if sports bars, etc. is probably Marlinton, 15 miles away and they probably don't have your favorites.

Food is an individual choice. Some people do elaborate cooking while camping. Myself, the simpler the better. I eat a lot of dry food and what I call cardboard soup (poor boiling water into the cup and wait five minutes) when camping. My actual cooking is usually limited to corn on the cob in season and baked potatoes.

If you don't have a camp stove, I would not run

Camping Tips continued

out and buy one. You should not have a problem finding someone to share theirs. I will suggest that people either prepare their breakfast at the central gathering spot (usually around Gallie's Taj), or bring their stove over after they are done, so it is convenient for people to share stoves. We will check Friday and see who needs access to a stove.

Saturday is the group diner. People usually bring or prepare a dish to share with the group.

Bike Stuff:

Don't forget to bring extra tubes, a patch kit, and even a spare tire is advisable. OH, don't forget to bring both front and rear bike wheels too!

Sleeping:

Keeping warm during the night is essential to getting a good night's rest. The number one best option is a good sleeping bag rated for low temperatures. And remember that the ratings are based on a person sleeping in their clothes. If you have no sleeping bag, or just a Summer weight bag, there are a couple options.

You can buy a low temperature rated bag (I would go at least down to 10 degrees) or improvise by using comforters. Generally, one decent thickness comforter added to a Summer weight bag will suffice. Make sure it is big enough to completely cover your existing bag, including the foot area. If you don't have a Summer weight bag, then a couple comforters will probably be necessary. For Summer camping, a cheap comforter I bought from the dollar store is what I use.

Zero rated bags can now be found as low as \$50 at Gander Mt.

You will need something to sleep on. This can be an inflatable mattress (fairly inexpensive \$20), a self inflating mattress (can be expensive \$30-\$100), a piece of foam (fairly inexpensive), or again a comforter folded up to make a mattress. The problem with the comforter, is that it provides no additional protection for moisture should water get in the tent.

Oh - one of the best ways to keep warm is to have a sleeping partner - lets rethink the number one best option. If you have a partner and are in the market for sleeping bags, consider getting one bag with a left hand zipper and the other with a right hand zipper. Most manufacturers design the bags so that a left and a right hand bag can be zipped together to make one large bag. Best to check before buying though.

Bedding down wearing socks, light gloves and even a cap as well as sweat pants and shirt can go a long way to a comfortable night's sleep. Also makes a midnight trip to the bath house more convenient.

Other Items:

Don't forget the usual toiletry items. Beaver Creek has hot and cold running showers. I prefer bringing several small towels rather than a few large towels. You can pack several small towels in the same space that a large bath towel takes up. For camping I use hand towels. They air dry quicker than large towel. If I get it dirty, I still have more. They are a lot easier to keep from rubbing the shower floor and walls. If I have to use one to wipe down the tent, no big deal. Believe it or not ladies, you can dry yourself with a small towel. Well maybe one for the body and one for the hair.

Lighting:

Generally LED headlamps are the way to go. They produce an even light, batteries last a long time, and they leave your hands free. They are fairly inexpensive now. Bring some spare batteries. The larger camping lanterns are to be used only for meal preparation. Part of the joy of camping, is enjoying the darkness. If you have to have light, pick a spot close to the shower house.

Packing:

You can save space by Z folding items rather than G folding. Try it on clothes or towels and see if it doesn't make a difference.



Z verses G

