

# The Ultimate Family Camping List

## 1.0. Introduction

First off, this is a big list! This list should cover a week or two of camping - rain or shine as long as you bring enough food and clothes. I like to be prepared and comfortable. Not everything on this list is essential but if you work your way through the list and consciously decide whether to bring each item or not, at least you shouldn't forget anything. This full list takes up approximately 5' x 5' x 8' of space in whatever vehicle or trailer you can fit it in! I used to fill the back of my Chevy Suburban and the kids would ride with my wife in her van. Recently we have purchased an enclosed utility trailer to carry the gear and pull behind my Yukon.

## 2.0. Tents and shelter

We use Coleman tents. They aren't top of the line and only last two or three years if you camp a lot, but they are reasonably priced. I usually pick a new tent up for the collection each year at BJs Wholesale club in the spring.

- Main tent - we are a family of seven. Our current main tent is a Coleman 17' x 9' tent.
- Secondary tent(s) - we have 2 Coleman 7' x 15' tents. We frequently have one or more of our kids friends along so these tent(s) are for the kids.
- Cooking canopy - EZ Up 10'x10' canopy to cook under and to connect the tents in case of rain.
- Screen House - Eureka 10' x 12' hexagonal screen house for bug free dining and sitting around at night. This fits over a picnic table available at many sites.
- Outdoor carpets - 2 - 6'x9' outdoor carpets to go under the canopy (this works great at keeping the tents clean and having a good-clean place to cook).
- Tarp - 30'x40' tarp to set up over tent(s) and canopy (should be able to walk from the tent under the canopy without getting wet and insure everything stays dry).
- Tent poles - 10 adjustable tent poles with Bungee cords and stakes to hold up tarp edges.

Our most common set-up is the main tent plus one or two smaller tents, the canopy and screen house. The layout we use is illustrated in figure 1.

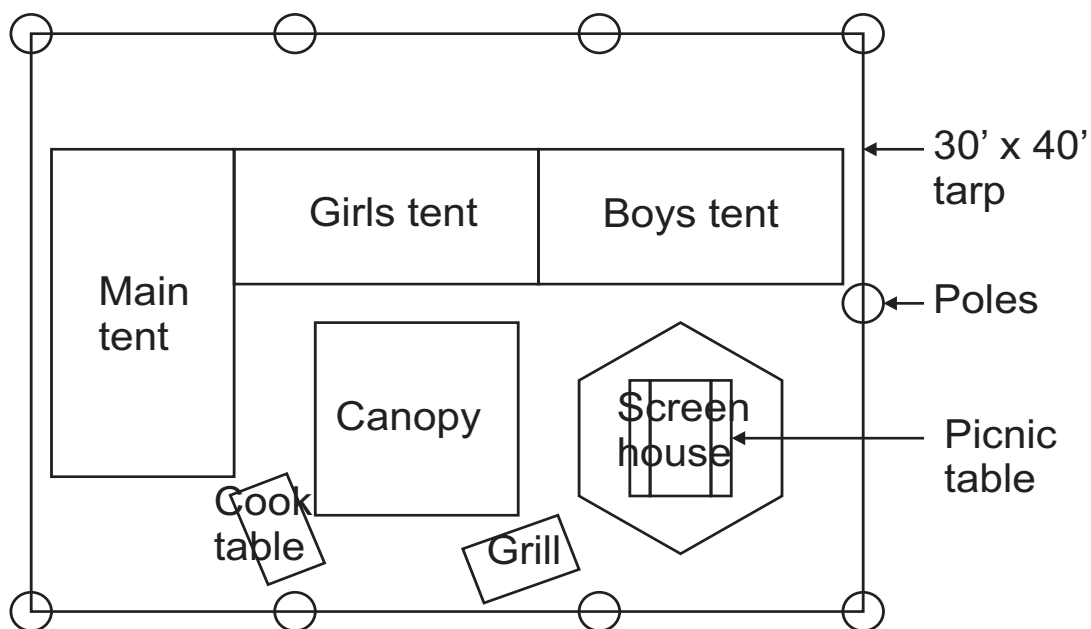


Figure 1. Camp site layout.

Figure 2 is a picture of our camp site from a 2005 camping trip and figure 3 is a close up of the cooking tabl.



**Figure 2. Typical camp site set-up.**

In this picture the screen house is on the right with a picnic table underneath, the main tent is on the left and the second tent is in the back in the middle. This picture also shows the trailer we use to haul all of our gear on the right side.

The cooking table shown in figure 3 is a fold up aluminum table with a shelf underneath. We keep napkins, paper plates and plastic utensils underneath and use the top for preparing meals. It is also really handy to have a package of unscented baby wipes for hand cleaning during cooking.

My experience is any tent leaks if it rains long enough plus the walls get damp quickly, with a tarp over the top everything stays dry.

Make sure when you pick where to set up you take into account how water will flow if it rains. I have had a river of mud run through the middle of our camp site when we located our site badly.

### **3.0. Beds and sleeping bags**

- Coleman queen size air mattresses. We have several of these along with queen size sheet and polar fleece blankets we use for main beds. I find the sheets and blankets more comfortable in the summer than sleeping bags. I also have cool max mattress pads I put between the bottom sheet and the air bed and clips to keep the bottom sheets from coming loose.
- Coleman twin size air mattresses and sleeping bags for the kids and miscellaneous friends.

### **4.0. Large Rubbermaid action packer - sleeping**

Rubbermaid makes latching bins called action packers. I keep all of our camping gear in these ready for use.

- 3 - sets of queen size sheets.

- 3 - queen size 200 weight fleece blankets.
- 3 sets of sheet retaining straps to keep the bottom sheets from slipping off.
- 1 - Quick pump II with extra D-cell batteries (for pumping up the Instabeds). This is a must have if you use air mattresses, it pumps them up and also deflates them when you are done. It is designed to work with the Coleman mattresses.



**Figure 3. Cooking table.**

### **5.0. Chairs and tables**

- 3 - Double width folding armchairs.
- 2 - single width folding armchairs.
- 1 - Small folding side tables (can eat off of under the canopy when it is raining, or hold up a citronella candle for bug control).

### **6.0. Small action packer**

- 10 - Extra tent stakes.
- 1 - Hatchet.
- 1 - Folding saw.
- 50' - Rope for holding up tent poles (parachute cord, 500# test).
- 50' - Clothes line rope. Used for drying wet towels and bathing suits.
- 20 - Clothes pins.
- 2 - Citronella candles.
- 1 - Hornet and wasp spray.
- 2 - Insect repellent (the type you spray on people).
- 2 - Sun screens.
- 1 - Dust pan.
- 1 - Straw dust brush.

- 1 - Roll duct tape.
- 2 - Packs playing cards (for when it rains).
- 1 - Poker set with cards and chips in a metal travel case (for when it rains).
- 1 - Dominos set in a metal travel case (for when it rains).
- 1 - Assorted tools in a small red Eddy Bauer nylon bag.
  - 1 - Screwdriver with interchangeable regular and Phillips bits in handle.
  - 1 - Heavy-duty scissors.
  - 1 - Diagonal wire cutters (medium).
  - 1 - Vise grip pliers (medium).
  - 1 - Folding Allen wrench set.
  - 1 - Roll electrical tape.
  - 1 - Tube Super Glue.
  - 1 - Box of assorted nails, 2", 2-1/2", 3" (approximately 10 each size).
  - 1 - Roll of steel wire.
  - 1 - Sharp awl.
  - 1 - Medium claw hammer.
  - 1 - Ice pick

### **7.0. Large Rubbermaid action packer - Cooking**

- 1 - Box of drawstring garbage bags.
- 1 - Roll paper towel.
- 1 - Large Bar-BQ fork.
- 1 - Large Bar-BQ spatula.
- 1 - Large Bar-BQ tongs.
- 1 - Bar-BQ grill brush.
- 2-3 - Grill lighters.
- 1 - Connecting hose for hooking up the stove to the distribution tree. Coleman makes a distribution tee that stand on a standard 20 pound propane tank and holds a lantern and can feed a stove, but you need the hose to connect the stove to the tee.
- 1 - Mountain Safety Research pan set - 2 nested pans with handle and cover in a mesh bag.
- 1 - Mountain Safety Research folding fry pan.
- 1 - Large pan to cook pasta in.
- 3 - Plastic table clothes with hold down clips.
- 2 - 5 gallon folding water carriers (use to wash dishes, wash hands and brush teeth).
- 1 - Fire extinguisher.
- ~10 - Each 1qt. And 1 gals zip lock bags.
- 2 - Griddles for the grill. The Coleman Roadtrip grill can accept grills, griddles or pan burners.
- 2 - Pan stands for the grill. The Coleman Roadtrip grill can accept grills, griddles or pan burners.
- 1 - Smaller Rubbermaid clear box - cooking kit:
  - 1 - Small plastic cutting board (sits in the bottom of the plastic box).
  - 3 - Sharp knives (large, medium, small).
  - 1 - Measuring cup set (plastic, metal gets dented).
  - 1 - Measuring spoon set (plastic, metal gets dented).
  - 1 - Can opener.
  - 1 - Bottle opener.
  - 1 - pocket meat thermometer.
  - 1 - Squirt bottle of vegetable oil.
  - 1 - Salt and pepper shaker set.
  - 1 - Covered bowl of sugar.

- 2 - Dish towels.
- 2 - Sponges with back side scrubbing surfaces.
- 1 - Plastic spatula.
- 3 - Large plastic spoons, 1 strain type, 2 solid.

### 8.0. Other cooking items

- 1 - Propane distribution tree (feeds the stove and a lantern from a 20# propane tanks, works great).
- 2 - 20# propane tanks (fill before every trip)(2nd tank required if a turkey fryer is used).
- 1 - Propane lantern to connect to the top of the distribution tree with extra mantels (provide light under the canopy and light to cook by) (Coleman makes a soft sided lantern case, much easier to get in and out of than the plastic case).
- 1 - Aluminum top cooking station (has a wire shelf underneath and a wire hanging rack back).
- 1 - Grating for cooking over a fire.
- 1 - Coleman Road Trip Grill - this is a free standing fold-up portable grill. It comes with grills on both side but there are optional griddles and pan rings. I have 2 grills, 2 griddle and 2 pan stands so I can grill, griddle or heat pans on either or both sides at once n any combination.
- 1 - Dish pan.
- 1 - Bottle dish washing liquid.
- 1 - (optional) Turkey fryer (boils water really quick and is great for big vats of stuff).
- 1 - Propane lantern with extra mantels (for lighting picnic table area and other general camp use) (Coleman makes a soft sided lantern case, much easier to get in and out of than the plastic case).
- 2 - Small propane cylinders to run 2nd lantern.

### 9.0. Large Rubbermaid action packer - Food and paper goods

You should keep this action packer locked up in your car to keep out the animals.

- 1 - small jar Mayonnaise (put in cooler after opening).
- 1 - small jar Peanut butter.
- 1 - small squirt bottle jelly.
- Catsup, mustard and relish.
- Salad dressing.
- Pudding snacks (non refrigerated type).
- Miscellaneous kudos' bars and rice crispy treats.
- Bread.
- Bagels.
- Chips.
- Pasta (recommend ziti in case you have to make it in a small pan).
- Jar(s) of pasta sauce.
- 4 - Pre-measured pancake mix packs (I buy dry mix and put it into zip-lock bags and mark on the bags how much water to add).
- 1 - box of Minute Rice
- ~50 - Paper plates (I like Chinet because they are strong and don't break like the foam plastic plates do, you can also burn them).
- ~50 - Plastic forks (I like the heavy weight clear plastic ones).
- ~30 - Plastic knives (I like the heavy weight clear plastic ones).
- ~30 - Plastic spoons (I like the heavy weight clear plastic ones).
- ~20 - Plastic bowls.
- 2 - Packages of large napkins.

### 10.0. Coolers

- 1 - Igloo 120-quart cooler for drinks, fruit, yogurt, snacks, butter, cream cheese, Ketchup, Mustard, Relish, Mayonnaise, Pickles, etc. (kids allowed to go into this cooler (Condiments go into this cooler after they are opened). This cooler will keep ice for 5 days + in high heat. Cheap coolers lose ice in one or two days.
- 1 - Coleman 50-quart SS Cooler for meats and cold cuts, scrambled eggs mixed up in a lexan bottle (kids not allowed to go in this cooler). Also keep ice for 5+ days in high heat.

### 11.0. Other miscellaneous items

- 1 - Small shovel.
- 2 - Short handled brooms - 1 straw (good on the outdoor carpeting), 1 fine bristle plastic (good in the tents) (bring both because dirt cleanup is constant and everyone always wants the brooms at the same time on packing day)
- 1 - Camera with flash, 24mm-120mm lens, Lens hood, extra batteries, 3 rolls ASA400 and 3 rolls ASA200 film all packed in a water proof, shock resistant Pelican Case. This year I am switching to digital with a Nikon D70.
- 1 - King Pelican water proof flashlight (8D cell model) with extra batteries.
- 3 - Super Saber Pelican water proof flashlight (3C cell model) with extra batteries.
- 1 North Face day pack for hiking or any long trips. Use it to carry jackets, first aide kit, drinks, camera, etc.
- 1 - Small custom first aide kit for hiking in Adventure Medical pouch (this bag is stocked for basic cuts and bruises while hiking plus a blood stopper for big wounds).
- 1 - Large custom first aide kit for all emergencies in an Iron Duck EMT bag (this bag is stocked to be the next best thing to a rescue squad).
- 2 - Motorola Walk-About digital radios.
- 1 - Silva compass (high end orienteering, don't remember the model).
- 1 - Small plastic wastebasket for in the tent.
- 1 - Box of Kleenex for in the tent (I always have a runny nose).
- 3 Coleman battery powered fluorescent lanterns for use in the tents.

### 12.0. Clothes

Clothes sets are per person. This is a summer list, pack additional items as appropriate in the spring and fall. I pack these in duffels to make it easy to stuff them into odd spaces. Eddie Bauer make really nice duffle bags. This year I am also bringing an REI camping closet to organize my clothes in. If it works out well I may buy a couple more.

- 1 - Bathing suit.
- 1 - Hat.
- 1 - Belt.
- 1 - Rain jacket and optional rain pants, should be a waterproof breathable set.
- 1 - light fleece jacket.
- 1 - set of Underwear per day.
- 2-3 - pair of shorts.
- 1 - pair of long pants.
- 1 - T-shirt per day.
- 1 - long sleeve shirt
- 2 - pairs of shoes (sneakers and hiking boots typically) (may also want flip-flops for the beach and shower).
- Diapers with wipes and Caldascene powder if traveling with infant/toddlers.
- Swim diapers if traveling with infant/toddlers.

- 1 - beach type towel each person with 2 spares for the group.
- 1 - large mesh duffle bag for dirty clothes (shared by the group or by tent/family, this works great to keep dirty clothes separate, you can buy them at Sports Authority).

### 13.0. Toiletries

I pack these in a mesh bag and leave them the back of the truck. I find it easier to get to them in the truck than in the tent and we always use them outside the tent anyway.

- 2 - rolls toilet paper in water proof zip lock bags (just in case).
- Soap (in a plastic soap container).
- 1 - Toothbrush each (in a zip-lock bag).
- 1 - tube Toothpaste each of adult and kid toothpaste.
- Razors as required with shaving cream if used.
- Dental floss.
- Nail clippers.
- Tweezers.
- Q-tips in a zip lock bag.
- 1 - Container Shampoo each of adult, kid and special.
- 1 - Container U-Lactin lotion (I have bad skin).
- Any prescription medicines as required (I bring them in multi-day plastic packs already organized).

### 14.0. General menu suggestions

- Breakfast:
  - Pancakes mix, just add water.
  - Scrambled eggs from pre-made mix (eggs and milk in a wide mouth Lexan bottle).
  - Bagels with butter and or cream cheese.
  - Cereal with milk (I bring individual milk bottles).
  - Orange juice (I bring small juice bottles).
  - Canadian Bacon (I slice up Canadian bacon and put into zip lock bags).
- Lunch:
  - Sandwiches with cold cuts on assorted breads or PB&J.
  - Fruit.
  - Yogurt.
  - Pudding.
  - Chips.
- Dinner:
  - Hamburgers.
  - Hot Dogs.
  - Steak Tips (Butcher Boy pre-marinated and vacuum packed).
  - Rice.
  - Grilled Vegetables (pre cut in a zip lock bag).
  - Pasta and sauce.
  - Pre-made stews and soups.
  - Salad - bring the pre packed lettuce, if you want tomatoes and cucumbers bring them whole and cut them up when you need them or they get soggy (or use cherry or grape tomatoes), bring shredded carrots, pre cut mushrooms et.c if desired. Be sure to bring salad dressing.

### 15.0. Trailer

Starting last year we have been using a trailer to carry all of our gear. We have an American Hauler 12' x 5' trailer that had manufactured 6'8" tall so I can walk in it. It has a back ramp and side door for easy

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access. I have fitted it out with a 20 gallon water tank, pump and small sink, battery system with inverter charger and a propane fueled refrigerator. I also carry a porta potty in the trailer. The trailer supports us so we can tent camp anywhere and be self sufficient.