

7 WAYS TO SAVE MONEY ON CAMPING COSTS

Q: I'm planning a camping trip for the summer, and I'd love to keep the trip as low-cost as possible. How can I cut down on camping costs?

A: It's great that you're looking for ways to trim your vacation expenses. We can help! Read on for seven ways to save on camping costs.

1. Save on location

Nightly rates for camping sites can cost a pretty penny during peak camping season. But why pay the fee when you can camp for free? You can find a campground where you can pitch your tent or park your RV at no cost, on Freecampsites.net or Campendium.com.

Another great option is to camp at a national forest. You'll be charged an entrance fee as well as an amenity fee, but you're free to stay anywhere on these grounds as long as you follow park guidelines. If you're a frequent camper, consider purchasing a National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands annual pass. For just \$80 a year, or \$20 for individuals age 62 and older, you'll have access to more than 2,000 national parks and national wildlife refuges. The pass covers entrance fees, parking fees, amenity fees and more. If you're currently a member of the U.S. military, you and your dependents are entitled to a free annual pass.

Finally, if your schedule allows, consider mid-week camping. Lots of campgrounds offer lower prices on off-peak days.

2. Consider "workamping"

If you don't live near a national park and you'd love a free stay, "workamping" can be a terrific option. Lots of campsites and RV parks are now offering this choice: For a bit of hard work, you'll be granted free access to the campgrounds. You might even walk away with some extra cash in your pocket!

3. Rent or borrow camping gear

High-quality camping gear such as tents, sleeping bags, camping stoves and camping clothes can cost a pretty penny. In fact, according to the American Camper Report from Coleman Company, adult campers spent an average of \$546 on camping gear in 2016.

You can have your gear and your budget, too, by double-thinking the purchase of brand-new gear. Are you a frequent camper? If not, does it really pay to spend big bucks on specialized equipment you'll only use once or twice a year? If you have friends who practically live in a tent or RV, ask about borrowing their equipment for your trip. Otherwise, consider renting the gear you need from companies like REI Co-op. If you'd rather have your own equipment, check out sites like Switchback Gear Exchange for gently used camping paraphernalia at terrific prices.

4. Skip the prepackaged meals

Yes, they might be super-convenient, but they're also super-expensive. Save a ton on food costs this trip by ditching the prepackaged meals. You can find loads of ideas for easy camping meals you can cook over a fire by doing a quick Google search. Often, all you need is some basic food supplies and a roll of aluminum foil!

5. Share meal prep

If you always camp as a group, take full advantage by sharing the meal prep. Divide the meals completely, having each family be fully responsible for several meals. Alternatively, you can create a master list of supplies and food and then



divide and conquer. This way, only one of you needs to bring small packets of ketchup and a jug of maple syrup, while another one brings the coffee and salt. The packing and meal prep are a whole lot easier when they're shared!

6. Pack like you're being marooned on an island

Don't set out on your trip until you've checked that you've packed everything on your list at least three times. It will take a few extra minutes, but it's worth the time and effort. You don't want to be forced to pay inflated small-town convenience store prices for forgotten items like bandages or batteries.

To keep it simpler, create a master list of everything you need to bring on a camping trip. Make a digital and physical copy of the list. When you return from your trip, review the list and edit it according to how it all went down. Do you need to bring more paper cups next time? Did you overdo it on the ice? Adjust as necessary. Before your next trip, use the list when packing so that you don't forget a single item.

7. Check out free camping activities on your campsite

Many campgrounds feature boat rentals of all kinds, but they can be pricey. Enjoy every minute of your camping trip by exploring walking trails, fishing and bike riding along a forest path. Don't forget to pack some board games and books for rainy days.

Use these tips when planning your trip and you'll save big on costs without compromising on the camping experience. Here's wishing you the camping trip of a lifetime, from all of us here at MembersAlliance!

Your Turn: Have some camping hacks that save on costs? Share your best tips with us in the comments!

SOURCES*:

<http://bargainbabe.com/20-quick-tips-to-save-money-camping/>

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