

# Travel

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## 10 steps to first-time family camping

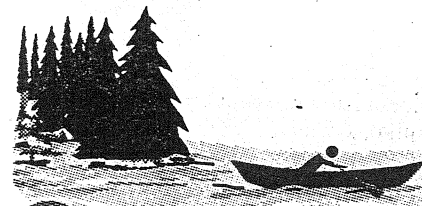
By Page Hurley Shugrue  
Special to the Sunday Telegram

The first time my husband, Ed, and I decided to go camping, our friend, John, laughed. He couldn't imagine our city-slicker, fast-food family surviving in a tent.

"You'll never make it," he said.

Despite John's warning, we decided to persevere. One late July afternoon, we haphazardly stuffed our station wagon with the usual camping provisions such as sleeping bags, coolers, inflatable mattresses and, of course, the tent. Along for the ride were our three young daughters, Hillary, Molly and Rosie, as well as our Toto-look-alike dog, Peppy. Wedged between a duffle bag and a sack of groceries, he was the only one not complaining.

We finally left Boston for Vermont, where we envisioned cool mountain air, crystalline rivers and moonlight swims. Yet,



### Canoeing the state's waterways

By Christine F. Ridout  
Special to the Sunday Telegram

One of the best-kept secrets in Massachusetts is the 18,000 acres of land preserved by The Trustees of Reservations. These lands

finding this fantasy campground at dusk was no easy task. While the girls and I suggested the state park system, near nature's cornucopia and far from crowds, Ed advocated private campgrounds, near enough to nature, but convenient, too.

Ed prevailed by selecting the first private park he saw off Interstate 91. Cruising around in darkness, he ignored the ever-increasing din of unhappy campers' voices. Ed chose a spot equally distant from the bathroom, the pool, and our nearest neighbor's RV, draped in Christmas lights, pink flamingos and Elvis memorabilia.

Almost immediately, my former Marine Corps husband barked orders to his squad.

Hillary and I wrestled with the tent, Molly and Rosie puffed on the mattresses and Ed stirred himself a martini.

By the second drink, he began to think camping was fun, and by the third, he was sprawled out on a



PAGE HURLEY SHUGRUE

Hillary, Molly and Rosie Shugrue check out crayfish for a campfire supper, during a subsequent trip to New Mexico.

partially inflated mattress, snoring along with "Don't Be Cruel," compliments of The King next door.

Maybe John had a point, I

thought that night, as Peppy confused the tent with a fire hydrant. We definitely weren't making it.

But, with morning came

democracy and wisdom.

Abandoning our dry, dusty, noisy campground, we discovered the site of our dreams, nestled on the Connecticut River's banks. We even found country stores, flea markets and local museums nearby.

As the days went by, we began to establish a rhythm for settling and breaking camp. And in the process, we realized that, with adequate preparation and planning, spending the night in a nylon and zipper house can be fun. Really.

Here are the steps to take:

#### 1. A LITTLE RESEARCH GOES A LONG WAY...

Any first-timer should do some preliminary reading before spending valuable days and dollars on camping.

For destination ideas, the American Automobile Association publishes regional guidebooks on AAA-approved campgrounds, including phone numbers, directions, amenities, site

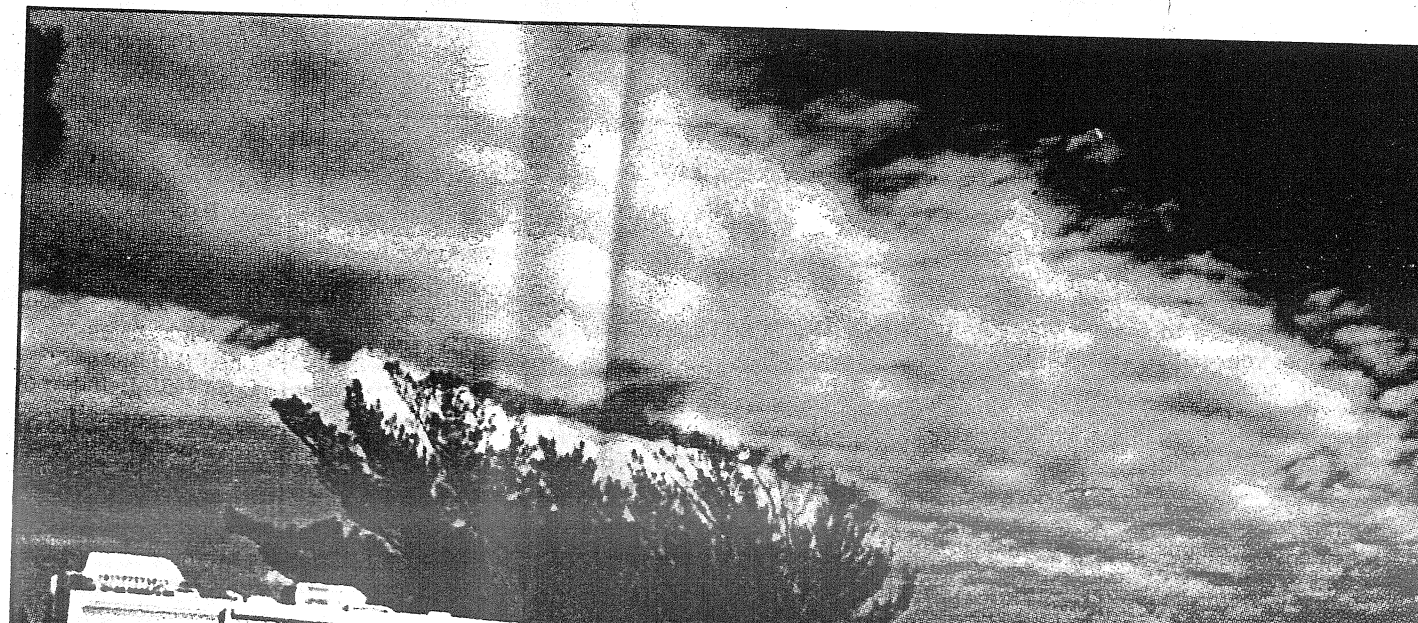
availability and cost.

For humorous and helpful camping tips, the Appalachian Mountain Club offers several publications, among them "Camping for Mere Mortals" and "The Basic Essentials of Camping," which will educate as well as entertain. But don't leave home without a definitive compilation of U.S. and Canadian campsites, like Woodall's "RV and Campground Directory."

#### 2. AS THE BOY SCOUTS SAY, BE PREPARED...

Always pack a well-stocked first-aid kit with plenty of bandages, antiseptic, sunblock and bug spray. A small fire extinguisher and multipurpose Swiss Army knife are not luxuries. In fact, never economize on quality camping gear, which can last a lifetime. For comfort and security, consider buying a portable potty, especially if that waterfront site is a mile from the bathroom.

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### RV CAMPING

## Ramblin' to Branson

By Walt Miller  
Special to the Sunday Telegram

BRANSON, MO. — RVers by the thousands contribute to the nightmare traffic that jams this country music Nashville satellite.

Lying in the heart of the Ozarks,

# How to survive first-time family camping

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### 3. LEAVE THE KITCHEN SINK AT HOME...

but bring some helpful kitchen sundries like presoaped scouring pads, dishtowels, mitts and sandwich bags. Your food will last longer in a cooler packed with block ice, not the cubed variety.

**Hint:** Make your own ice by filling and freezing 90 percent of a plastic gallon jug, leaving some room at the top for water expansion. When the ice melts, you have good drinking water and no watery mess. Frozen vegetable-filled bags also make excellent insulation and are always ready for cooking.

### 4. FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED...

Involve the children in your

plans right away, from organizing provisions and mapping itineraries to choosing the best campgrounds and sites. Assign tasks well ahead so that confusion is minimal on arrival. For example, if your tent is new, use the living room floor or front lawn for practice staging sessions.

Pack the first day's menu in advance, including plenty of baked goods, salads and snack foods. Never forget the marshmallows.

### 4. ON YOUR MARK, GET SET, GO...

Allow plenty of time for packing the car, leaving the essentials for last. For instance, begin with toys, books and miscellaneous supplies by stashing them under seats and out of sight. Then, layer bulky

sleeping bags, pillows and duffel bags on the floor and back seat, cozy enough for the kids. Finally, add the tent, cooler, groceries, cooking equipment, lanterns and flashlights for quick and easy access.

Always arrive at your destination during daylight. Setting up camp can take 30 minutes to two hours, depending on the preparation. Nothing is more discouraging than darkness while your kids whine or pummel each other.

### 5. LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION...

Finding that first campground will be less stressful if you plan ahead. While private parks offer amenities such as washing ma-

chines, warm showers, playgrounds and movies, they can be expensive (\$15-\$20 per night) and unimaginative.

For under \$10, federal and state campgrounds are often Mother Nature's best, near glorious lakeshores, canyons and riverbeds.

**Hint:** Ask for a "primitive" site and you might get that million-dollar view for a fraction of the price. In any case, many parks accept reservations, which can ease your pre-camping jitters.

### 6. INSTANT AND ELEGANT DINING...

From the moment you arrive, get your little helpers helping. They can gather firewood, start the campfire, chop vegetables or stir-fry supper itself. Think "butane" with stoves and lanterns, which ignite immediately.

Meanwhile, for ambient dining upgrades, bring a tablecloth from home and a good, portable radio, tapedeck or CD player. Your children's freshly picked flowers will add another touch of class at the table.

### 7. SWEET DREAMS...

While bedrolls are an easy packing and sleeping option, they can also be spartan. For a comfortable and practical alternative, consider blow-up mattresses, instead. Always remember the inflating pump, simple enough for the smallest foot to press. Yet the purchase of sleeping bags often becomes the most daunting and expensive of all: Fiberfill or down? For a cost-free solution, think about bringing your own comforter from home and using the functional equivalent before investing your money.

### 8. CANINE CAMPING...

Your tenting fantasies may also include Fido, cuddled at your feet, but consult a major guidebook before inviting the dog along. Some state campgrounds, like those in Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, do not allow pets, although most federal and private do. Trails are usually

off-limits in any park and leashes always required.

### 9. NOW FOR THE REST OF THE STORY...

Once you've sampled that first, snug night in nature's motel, hopefully, you'll be hooked. With the major work done, your true camping experience can begin.

Guided nature walks and hiking excursions, ranger campfire talks and orientation films are common, seasonal fare at many federal and state facilities. But your entertainment needn't go further than the tent site with blueberry picking, loon listening, moonlight dipping, marshmallow toasting, ghost-story telling, wildflower painting, wood-carving and much more.

### 10. CAMPING FOR ALL SEASONS...

You're definitely hooked when you wistfully store the tent on Labor Day.

Then don't. In fact, Indian Sum-

## IF YOU GO ...

■ **FOR DETAILS:** Contact the American Automobile Association for regional guidebooks on AAA-approved campgrounds; Tel.: 1-800-222-4357.

Or contact the Appalachian Mountain Club for educational and entertaining publications; Tel.: (617) 523-0636.

mer provides some of nature's finest beauty and bounty, with warm days, cool nights, no crowds and few, if any, mosquitoes. Fall foliage hikes and biking expeditions will also augment your camping memories.

To extend the season even more, think about renting a cabin, utilizing much of the same equipment you already have. And for winter doldrums, visit the nearest camping outfitter's store or RV show. When spring finally arrives you'll be a pro.

## Magnolia campground's outstanding

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liage industry, according to Dr. Richard W. Henley, a horticulturist stationed there.

### LAKE APOPKA

Magnolia Park fronts on huge Lake Apopka, which was at one time the second largest lake in Florida. It was sacrificed during World War II by numerous drainage canals and water control devices to expand vegetable production, until it now ranks fourth.

Once proclaimed, "The bass capital of the world," it is now Florida's sickest lake; practically sterile because of prolonged agricultural fertilizer runoff, flood control efforts and widespread residential development. The lake's fish population is pretty much limited to an estimated 10 million pounds of gizzard shad.

Lake Apopka is surrounded by acreage on the east side devoted to small and large fern, foliage and cut-flower growers, and by citrus groves on the west.

Most of these are mom-and-pop operations. They know you can't protect a tender crop of flowers or tropical foliage when a deadly freeze sneaks in behind a blue northwester howling down the peninsula or across the gulf without heat and overhead protection.

Everything is grown under shade

## IF YOU GO ...

■ **FOR DETAILS:** Magnolia Park is on County Road 437 (Ocoee-Apopka Road) and is next to Lake Apopka; Tel.: (407) 886-4231.

Trimble Park is three miles west of US 441 on Earlwood Avenue. Tel.: (407) 383-1993.

Kelly Park (Rock Springs) is a half-mile east of CR 435 on Kelly Road. Tel.: (407) 889-4179.

Moss Park is four miles southeast of State Road 15 on Moss Park Road. Tel.: (407) 273-2327.

Fee for non-residents of Orange County is \$14 a night.

For the City of Orlando's Turkey Lake Park, 3401 Hiawasse Road, Orlando, FL 32835, Tel.: 407-299-5594.

Alongside the foliage is miles of orange and grapefruit groves, citrus processing plants, even fishing worm farmers.

And the ubiquitous mobile home park and condos and the housing developments which are creeping across the Florida interior like the kudzu vine.

### MAGNOLIA PARK OUTSTANDING

All of the Orange County parks are pretty, but Magnolia is outstanding; firewood was free. Empty the wood bin at your campsite and it was miraculously refilled.

While it was midsummer, we burned plenty of wood and inhaled plenty of smoke and cooked an occasional meal over the fire.

you to pick up. All over Canada's Yukon province, throughout Alaska, and at the Catoctin National Forest campground close to Camp David in Maryland you will find wood cut to size, enthusiastically provided.

In each instance, I purred and poured on the wood and lingered just a little longer.

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**POUT & TROUT** Family Campground, River Rd., Rutland 508-886-6677. Fishing, Paddle Boat, Pool, Game Rooms, Planned Activities.

**RUSNIK "A FAMILY CAMPGROUND"** Hampton-Salisbury Beach area. Pool, Recreation Hall. Seasonal Sites. 508-462-9551.

**SANDY Pond Campground,** 834 Bourne R.J. Plymouth, 02360 Large sites, restrooms, rec hall, pond, separate tent area 508-759-9336.

**SHADY PINES,** Savoy-High in the Berkshires. 35x70 pool, rec hall, snack bar, playground, activities, entertainment Sats. 413-743-2694.

**SUMMIT HILL** Campground, Washington, "By Campers, For Campers" Complete rec. facilities. Near Tanglewood. 413-623-5761.

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