



BACKYARD CAMPING

SUMMER VENTURE

Camping has always been a hit with kids. The idea of sleeping in a tent under the stars, eating s'mores with charred marshmallows and the smell of mosquito repellent all combine to create great camping memories. Right? At least that's the way kids think about camping. For parents the idea of locating all of that camping gear, reserving one of those hard-to-find camp sites in the mountains... somewhere, locating some warm water to wash off the sticky marshmallows that somehow got in your daughter's hair and sending your kids to bed in a sleeping bag that got soaked by the late afternoon rainshower sometimes makes camping more of a headache than a memory maker. Unless you prefer sleeping on the lumpy ground because your air mattress had an unknown leak and locating the bathroom with a flashlight in the middle of the night.

Why not consider a back yard camp out? No reservations, no packing up gear, warm water is available 24/7 (including a full shower if needed), INDOOR bathrooms and if it does rain...you can reschedule for the following evening or wait it out inside. Depending on the age of your children, sleeping on the ground with them in the tent is optional. Now—you still might have mosquitos so keep the repellent handy.

Here's what you'll need.

- 1) **Camping:** Tent, sleeping bags, (sleeping pads are optional) flashlights and story books. If you don't have a tent, your neighbor probably does. If the weather cooperates, you could throw a blanket or a tarp over a rope strung between two trees or the legs on your swing set and you have a tent. If you don't have sleeping bags, a beach towel makes an excellent sleeping pad and the blankets off of the kid's beds will work fine. Bed sheets? Forget about them. This is camping!!
- 2) **Food:** Simple is the name of the game. If you have one of those backyard fire pits or a grill, there's nothing like having the kids roast their own hot dogs for dinner. If you use your grill, remove the grilling plates to allow closer contact with the flames. Plus, what's a campfire hot dog without little black smudges or burned spots. Parents should always monitor kids and fire. A coat hanger or green twig makes a good roasting stick. You can supplement with a veggie and/or fruit plate, chips and bottled water. Cold pork n beans eaten right out of the can with a plastic spoon will add to the camping experience. Everyone knows how to make s'mores...so go all of the way. S'mores are most enjoyed after the sun has gone down and the possibility of getting squishy marshmallow in someone's hair goes way up!
- 3) **Activities:** play a favorite yard games (bocce ball, croquet, or hide n seek) Send your kids on a backyard (younger kids) or neighborhood (older kids) scavenger hunt (See Scavenger Hunt ideas).

- 4) **Bedtime:** Lay on the grass and watch the moon rise. Pick a couple of great books to read by flashlight at bedtime. Be sure to bring several great books because of the no technology camping guideline. Many mountain camp grounds do not have WiFi so this will help it be more realistic. Lay with you kids under the stars or in the tent for bedtime reading.
- 5) **Breakfast:** Cereal, juice and fruit eaten on a blanket in the yard or on the patio table will complete your camping adventure. Or you could go all the way and make pancakes on your grill. Just kidding. Your stove in your kitchen will work very well for a hot breakfast. A favorite camp breakfast is called bulls-eyes. Drop an egg in your skillet and surround it with pancake batter. Cook it like a normal pancake only there is an egg in the bulls eye of the pancake. Top with butter and syrup or fruit. Or make a French toast bulls eye. Cut a circle out of the middle of a piece of bread. Dip in egg batter and place in a hot skillet. Drop an egg in the hole in the bread. Cook like normal French toast. Now you have a French toast bulls eye.
- 6) **Finish up** the camping experience by having the kids do all of the clean up. To add to the fun, have them pack all of the gear in the trunk of your car and drive around the block. When you get home the kids will disappear while you unload all of the gear by yourself. Just like real camping.

Another option is to double up a Backyard Movie WITH Backyard Camping. This is guaranteed to be a summer camping experience your family will never forget!

BACK YARD SCAVENGER HUNT IDEAS



- ant • bugs • clover • grass • leaves • rocks • bird • sticks • dog • flower • tree • cloud • pinecone • mushroom • acorn • squirrel • dandelion • thorn • caterpillar • hole in a tree • worm • tree bark • water • spider web • footprints



- something that moves
- something that smells.
- something that's square

- [& other shapes].
- something that's red
- [& other colors].

- something that starts with the letter "A" [& other letters].

You can also vary the amounts:
4 rocks, 3 leaves, etc.



**BACKYARD
SCAVENGER HUNT**

FIND: a white rock
 3 different leaves
 a flower petal
 something soft
 2 pebbles
 3 blades of grass
 something round
 a crooked stick
 a piece of bark
 a seed or berry
 something you like

FIND IT ALL. GET A PRIZE!