

2018

CAMPING WORKBOOK



CAMPING 101: HOW TO SIMPLIFY YOUR FIRST CAMPING TRIP

Introduction

This workbook is designed to help you plan your first camping trip! And includes tips to help you make it simple. When you first look at planning a camping trip, it can feel overwhelming. Stores are filled with super expensive gear... what do you need to have? What's a nice to have? Where should you go that will give you the best experience based on what experience you're looking for.

This workbook goes hand in hand with our 5 day Facebook Live series. May 14, 2018 to May 18, 2018. Or you can watch the replays at www.HTXoutdoors.com/camping

Use this workbook along with the Hiking Workbook for a complete view. Find all hiking resources here. www.HTXoutdoors.com/hiking

Brought to you by HTXoutdoors and Bayou City Outdoors

We are Houstonian's who love being outdoors. We like to have FUN and are looking to EXPLORE! Together HTXoutdoors and Bayou City Outdoors host over 100 events PER MONTH!

We have introduced hundreds of Houstonians to the Great Outdoors with:

- 101 classes online
- Hands on 101 training
- Advanced training
- Hosting events with expert event leader to show you the ropes
- Partnering with other Houston businesses to grow and expand small businesses in the Houston area. We love supporting locals and small businesses!
- Providing equipment for you to test out various activities such as kayaking, SUP, camping
- And bringing together a great group of people at the same time!

What's the difference? HTXoutdoors tends to be for 20's and 30's and Bayou City Outdoors tends to be 40s and up. Members of each club has access to the other so there is no wrong pick.

Each month, we offer events open to the public so you can see what it's all about for yourself.

[HTXoutdoors Public Events](#)

[Bayou City Outdoors Public Events](#)

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Day 1 {video 1} - Why do you want to go camping & How to pick a spot?

There are many reasons a person might want to go camping. Spend a few minutes to think about what you want to get out of your camping trip. Use the space below to write a little bit about what you want. There are no wrong answers.

Amy's Example: Why I love Camping:

I love being submerged in nature.

I'm not a creative person, but when I'm sitting by myself, outside, surround by nature, I can write better than normal! The ideas just coming rushing in. I get excited, rejuvenated. I like to go places where I have options. Explore some hiking trails in the morning, lay in a hammock by water for an afternoon nap. At night, I like to build a campfire. I alternative between eating well with Dutch Oven cooking and keeping it simple with food that doesn't need to be cooked.

The fewer the people I see the better. I want to hear the chirping of the birds... I can listen to the radio in the city, I don't need one on my camping trip. At night, I like a clear sky to look at the stars. Add the wind blowing in the trees and the sound of a river rushing by... even better. Time seems to slow down. Worries go out the door.

Action Item: When you're done, share your response in the Facebook Group and we can help you pick a location based on what you're looking to experience.

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Answer these questions to help you decide your camping experience.

Each park lists descriptions of activities available and any important information you need to know about. Such as wildlife, weather, road closures, trail closures, trail difficulty levels, etc. Use the questions below to help you know what to look for when reading park descriptions.

Do you want to be around other people? Yes, lots Some are okay No, little to none

Camping next to boy scouts/lots of kids? No problem Rather not Rather stay home

Do you want to have a campfire? Yes No I'm not sure

What are you going to sleep in at night? Tent Basic RV, Electric Full Hook Up RV

How far do you want to walk from your car to your site? Not very! < 1 mile Any

Do you want a flushing toilet: Definitely! Composting is okay I can use the woods

Do you want a shower: Definitely! I'm okay if there's water Don't need it

Do you want running water: Yes, and close by Yes, anywhere is fine Don't need it

How fancy do you want to eat? Beans & Hot Dogs Dutch Oven Something in between

Who are you camping with: Myself Adults Kids Pets

How many people: _____ How many pets: _____ Breeds: _____

(some parks have breed restrictions so be sure to check the park rules before bringing your pup)

What time of year are you going? Summer Fall Winter Spring

What time of year is the busy season for the park? Summer Fall Winter Spring

Does the park close at any points during the year? _____

What type of terrain are you looking for? Rocky Sandy Forests Grassy

What activities do you want to do while camping? Hiking Biking Beach Water

Action Item: Go back through the list and highlight your most important aspects of camping.

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Types of Parks & Reservations:

Texas State Parks and Wildlife

The state parks usually have a variety of different campsite sites. You can make reservations for up to 5 sites at a time online or call the reservation office. When booking spots, you can pick the type of site that you want (see below for descriptions of types of sites), and narrow down the loops, but you pick the specific site numbers when you arrive.

The earliest you can reserve a spot is 11 months in advance. Some parks fill up exactly 11 months in advance. Other parks, you have time to book but the earlier you reserve the better.

Boy Scout groups and families tend to use the Electric & RV spots in the state parks. I find water spots tend to be more on the quiet side but there are always exceptions.

When you enter the state parks, you check in at the front gate. Employees or volunteers can give you information about the park and you can pick up a free park map. The park maps are also available online.

Each park has a per person entry fee. The entry free amount varies by park. You can also get an annual state park pass that gets the entire car into the park for free. Plus discounts at the park store and camping. If you have 2-4 people in a car, the state park pass pays for itself in about 5 visits.

National Parks

National Parks tend to have less employees on site. Most of these camping sites do not require reservations so they are good for last minute camping trips. This works well for small groups who have a lot of flexibility in their plans but can be challenging for larger groups. Some sites can be reserved online. Go recreation.gov to find parks and make reservations. Trail maps can be difficult to find for many of these parks so more research is usually needed.

Private Parks

Private parks tend to be more expensive than the state parks but offer another option for camping. A lot of private parks tend to be setup for RVs. Like KOA. They tend to have pools, kid playgrounds, dog parks. The setup is more for a stationary type of camping trip and really good for kids.

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Types of Camp Sites:

Full Hook Ups, including sewer

Most these sites have RVs so at night, you might hear the hum of generators, air conditioners/heaters, and possibly TVs. RVs also have more room to pack things.

Radios, electric scooters, kids, animals. I saw a guy with a cage of cats outside next to his RV one day! Obviously, if you are camping with an RV, you'll want one of these spots. They are usually the most expensive camping sites.

Electric and Water

When a site has electricity, about half the sites, if not more, have an RV. Now there are a few caveats. If the campground has a large number of sites will full hook ups, sometimes the electric & water sites are more for tent camping. For electricity, typically each site has a power post near the parking spot with 1 to 2 outlets.

Water Only

You might see a pop-up camper here and there, but typically these sites will be tents only. An exception would be if the entire campground is water only. Water only & primitive sites are typically the cheapest. Prices depend on the park.

Primitive Sites

No RVs! Probably very little people because the camp site is not usually in eye sight of your car. That means, anything you want to camp with, you must carry to the site. Every primitive site is a different distance from the parking lot/trail head. Be sure to check how far the site is before you reserve it to ensure you can get all your stuff there!

Plug BCO & HTXO camping trips

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Day 2 {video 2} - Tips to make you look like an Camping Expert day 1

Start your first camping trip looking like an expert with these tips and tricks we have learned along the way.

- o Leave No Trace. There is an official organization for Outdoor Ethics. [Lnt.org](#) They have 7 standard principals for leave no trace. Below are the high-level steps. Visit [this website](#) for more in-depth descriptions and references.
 - o “Plan ahead and prepare
 - o Travel and camp on durable surfaces
 - o Dispose of waste properly
 - o Leave what you find
 - o Minimize campfire impacts
 - o Respect Wildlife
 - o Be considerate of others”
- o Respect noise levels. Every park has quiet hours. Typically, quite hours are from 10pm – 6am. Sounds carry in parks.
 - o Keep radios at a low volume during the day. Turn off your radio after dark. Some people want to hear nature while they are out there so please respect noise levels.
 - o If camping with kids, try to minimize the amount of screaming
 - o If camping with adults, try to minimize the amount of adult language and drunk loudness.
 - o Don’t “Beep” your cars to lock them
 - o Don’t slam your car doors
 - o Try to minimize how many times you’re opening and closing your car doors. Plan what you need and when.
- o Don’t burn the poker stick. Every campfire needs a poker stick to move the hot logs around and keep the fire going. Sometimes a good poker stick is hard to find so if you got one... don’t burn it! 😊
- o Know the park rules for firewood. In some parks you can only buy wood from within the park. Some prevent you from gathering wood from the park and some encourage. Most parks do not want you to bring in wood from other places because you could bring non-native bugs & fugs with you. Never cut from live trees or even dead ones. Only pick up sticks and branches that have already fallen off the trees and only if allowed in the area.

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- o Walk around other people's camp sites. Especially the sites near the restrooms. Everyone is designated their own space. Please respect the boundaries of the campsites.
- o Put away all your food as soon as you're done with it and do not feed the animals. Wiping crumbs on the ground counts as feeding the animals.
- o Store your food in appropriate places, especially at night. Keep in sealed containers, your car or a bear box if required. Never bring food in your tent.
- o Keep your tent doors closed – this is just for you! Keep the doors closed to keep bugs, critters and animals out of your tent.
- o Close the rainfly if you leave the camp site area in case unexpected rain comes. Staying dry is one of the most important parts of happy camping.
- o Avoid getting bug spray on your gear, such as tents and technical clothing. Bug spray can deteriorate the fabric causing it to break down much faster.
- o Use biodegradable soap to wash dishes and yourself.
- o Don't use a fogger on your campsite – I can't believe I had to add this one to the list but on my last camping trip, someone literally brought a pesticide fogger. Every morning and night, they fogged their campsite. Yes, the mosquitoes were bad... but the foggers kill way more than the mosquitoes. If you're camping in nature, don't kill the nature that you went there to see.
- o Put out the fire before you go to bed: Avoid causing a wild fire and put your fire out. Also, keep fires in the designated areas or create a fire ring around your fire if you're in a primitive site that allows fires.

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Day 3 {video 3} - Essentials vs Nice to Haves

It's easy to rack up a bill in the thousands of dollars when you start getting camping equipment. We have slowly acquired camping equipment over the last 20 years. The section is designed to help you get started. What things should you get first, when can you buy cheap and when should you invest.

Before buying any gear, you should have a rough idea on what types of activities you want to do primarily. For example, are you going to be a car camper, a backpacker or somewhere in between. With backpacking, the weight of each item is important. And the lighter the equipment is, the more expensive it is typically. If you're going to go car camping, you can usually buy cheaper, bulkier items.

The Essentials:

- Tent**
 - How many people will you have in 1 tent? _____
 - Do you want space for gear inside your tent? Yes No I'm not sure
 - Do you want to sit or stand in your tent? _____
 - What are you going to sleep on? Cot Air Mattress Ground Pad
 - How much space do you want when you lay down? _____
 - Are you putting the tent up by yourself or with help? _____
 - Do you want door on each side or is it okay to climb over people at night? _____
 - What is the average low temperature that you will camp in? _____
 - What is the average high temperature that you will camp in? _____
 - Will you camp regularly in rainy places? _____ Windy? _____

When you're looking for a tent, you want to consider the answers to these questions and look for a tent with dimensions and quality that matches the conditions you outlined. You might not know the answer to all these questions... sometimes it takes camping a few times to figure out what you really want.

IMPORTANT: Always check your tent bag for rain fly, poles and stakes before every camping trip. The first 2 tents I borrowed from friends were both missing the stakes! Not fun when you're camping on a windy beach!

Tent Seasons

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Tents come rated with seasons. A 4-season tent made to keep you warm in snow and cold temperatures.

A 3-season tent is good for most weather but tends to be cooler. The top of the tent tends to be bug netting and the rain fly is used to keep water out. The rain fly sits above the actual tent to allow air flow. A 3-season tent is usually a good choice for Texas camping. If you know you will camp in a lot of snow, you might want to opt for the 4-season tent.

You can also get a 2-season tent if you are going to camp primarily in warmer weather or little rain & wind.

Tent Recommendations:

Beginner Tent – [Coleman Sundome 4-Person Tent](#) ~\$100

Add Whole earth tent

Footprint or tarp:

- What is the dimensions of your tent? _____

A footprint is like a tarp that you put under your tent. You can use a regular tarp or buy one that is made for the tent you bought. The footprint is used to protect the bottom of your tent from rocks, sticks, etc, and it always helps keep water away from the bottom of the tent.

A few tents, such as Coleman, have durable bottoms and you don't need an extra tarp. The bottoms are sometimes called Tub.

When putting a tarp under your tent, you want to make sure none of the tarp hangs out. If it hangs out, the tarp could collect water and funnel it under your tent. Simply fold the tarp under so it's the same exact size as the tent.

Sleeping bag

- What is the average low temperature that you will camp in? _____
- What is the average high temperature that you will camp in? _____
- Is there a possibility that you will go backpacking? Yes No I'm not sure
- Do you want a mummy bag or a rectangle bag? _____
- Will you always sleep inside of something like a tent or on a tarp?
- Do you want down? _____ Synthetic? _____
- Do you tend to be hot or cold at night? _____

Mummy Bag

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Designed to fit snug. It's broader at the shoulders and gets narrower as you go towards your feet. By eliminating space for air, this bag tents to keep you warmer. It also has a 'hood' that can cinch around your head. For some people, it's hard to roll over in a mummy bag and it can take a little time to get used to the tightness.

Degree of Bag

The degrees of the bag tell you minimum temperature recommended to use the sleeping bag not necessarily warmth rate. For example, if a bag is rated 30 degrees F, it means you can use it in 30 degrees but without additional layers, you might be cold. I personally think a 30 degree bag is good in about 40-45 degrees with little layering.

Sleeping Bag Liners

You can purchase silk liners to help keep your sleeping bag clean and they also provide another layer of warmth. Now, you can also buy liners that specifically had degrees of warmth or on that cools you off.

Amy's Story – How I stay warm in 20-30 degrees

My bag is a 24 degree mummy bag. I have had it for 17 years now and I love it. I am warm in 30 degrees with the hood cinched up, warm base layers (250 Smartwool top & bottom), tall, heavy Smartwool socks, down botties, and a hat.

Sleeping Bag Recommendations:

[Megellan 30-degree mummy bag](#) - ~\$50 – We use this bag as the HTXoutdoors loan sleeping bag and it has kept many people warm! It's a longer bag so shorter people may be a little colder than a person who fills the bag. Remember, the less space for air, the warmer the bag will keep you.

Amy's Tent Experience:

I bought my first tent used. I didn't do any research and bought a no-name tent. I bought some seam sealer and off I went! I ended up using that tent for several years. I was lucky because until recently, it never rained when I went camping. The first time I did camp in rain, the tent leaked. If you get a used tent or cheap tent, you can buy a can of waterproofing for about \$10. It might make the tent "less breathable" but that is probably better than getting wet.

For the past 10 years, I mainly camp in my Hennessy Hammock Tent. I can use the hammock tent for car camping or backpacking.

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Ground Pad:

- How tall are you? _____
- What thickness do you want? _____
- Do you want to blow it up manually by blowing air into it? _____
- Do you want it to self-inflate? _____
- Do you want it to roll out without having to inflate it at all? _____

The ground holds heat and cold. The ground pad helps insulate you from a cold ground or cool you off a bit from a hot ground. It also provides a layer of comfort from rocks, holes and bumps on the ground.

Amy's Story

The first ground pad I bought was for a backpacking trip. Naturally, the store employees helping me suggested a pad where the size fit me perfectly because it help save some weight that I was carrying. A big con, in my opinion, with a ground pad that fits you perfectly is any part of your body that hangs off the pad is significantly colder than the parts on the pad. So many times I wake up in the middle of the night because my toes slide moved off the pad. Or arm didn't fall on the pad when I roll over and wake up with cold pieces of my body.

So I recommend getting a ground pad that is at least slightly bigger than your body. If you're car camping, and weight isn't much of a factor, I would get a larger ground pad.

NOTE: Air mattresses can actually make you colder since there is nothing to warm the air that's in the air mattress.

Light Source:

- Do you want it dark for star gazing? _____
- Do you want just enough light to see what you're doing? Or light up your areas? _____
- Do you want to carry it, hang it or wear it? _____
- Do you want batteries, solar, or electric? _____

Head lamps are perfect for camping. Once the sun starts to set, you put your head lamp on your head. You can turn it on and off as you need it. Some head lamps come with a red light option. The red light helps you keep your night vision but allows you to see where you're if you're walking to the restroom.

You can also get a lantern or carry a flashlight.

NOTE: Don't shine your head lamp in other people's eyes!

First Aid Kit:

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Think through the types of activities you are going to do during your camping trip. The more dangerous your activities or the more remote your location, the bigger the first aid kit you should bring.

Extras: It's always a good idea to have a few extra stakes for your tent, a pole splint in case a pole breaks, some p-cord (thin, nylon rope), and some duct tape to fix things if anything goes wrong.

Nice to haves

- Camping Kitchen
 - How elaborate do you want to make your meals? _____
 - Do you want to cook with the camp fire? _____
 - Do you want to cook with propane stoves? _____
 - Do you want to cook with Dutch Ovens? _____
 - Do you not want to cook at all and bring ready to go food? _____

The camping kitchen can get expensive quickly. To keep your first camping trip simple, it's best to bring food that's ready to eat. Sandwiches, packaged tuna or chicken packets, carrots, fruit, bars. Or food that cooks easily with boiling water such as oatmeal or couscous.

If you have food items that do not require cooking, you won't have to worry about the weather impacting your plans. If it's raining heavily before or during your trip, it might be difficult to find wood dry enough for a camp fire. Rain can also impact lighting coals for dutch oven cooking. Wind can make it difficult to use propane stoves. It's nice to have at least one that has wind guards on the side like this Coleman 2 burner.

If you do want to camp with propane stoves, you can cook on them exactly the same way that you use the stove in your house. I started out by bringing the oldest pots that I had in the kitchen. If you have cast iron skillets, those are the best for camp cooking. Even though they are heavy, they are easy to clean, hold the heat better and that extra flavor that we all love.

My favorite camp stove is a Coleman 1 burner. It's easier to put a big pot on it. Many of the 2 burners only fit small pots. I have 1 2 burner that I use for a small flat skillet or to boil water for coffee. Otherwise, I use a 1-burner. Click here for a list of our [kitchen gear](#).

- Hammock
 - Are there trees to hang a hammock? _____
 - Are you expecting a lot of rain or wind? _____

To me, there is nothing better than laying in a hammock in the middle of the afternoon. Or to watch the sunset. It's relaxing, allows you to sit there in the moment and take everything in.

- Gear and Gadgets

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There are so many little gadgets you can get that make a camping trip fun and easier. Solar chargers, ropes, extra lights, games,

Day 4 {video 4} - Learn when to splurge and when to save

For every type of gear out there, there is a cheap version and an expensive version. So how do you know to invest and when it's okay to go a little cheaper? The **recommendations** below are in no particular order, are based on my experience and where I like to spend my money. The types of activities you do may change this so if you have any questions, please ask.

How much do you really want that color?

The easiest way to save money when buying gear is not being picky about colors. Sometimes just the difference in color can mean 50%+ savings. I try to stick with color themes the best I can so my gear/clothes kind of look like it goes together, but I usually buy the color that is the cheapest.

Here is a perfect example. This REI Coop Fleece is warm, soft and super comfortable. I found a white one on the clearance rack in CA. I love it so much; I just searched the website to get another. Black would be nice but black is currently \$44.50. The blue and rouge are \$25.93. Or the red is \$30.03. Since I like blue, I'll get the blue...although I like red too so might get that color as well. While it would be nice to get a black one, I just can't justify paying almost double for the same fleece. I rather spend that money on a piece of gear where it makes a difference spending a little bit more.

Tents ...Quality; look for a good deal on quality brands

Your tent is your shelter when you are camping. If weather conditions take a turn, you want to ensure your gear will stay dry and your tent will actually stay up! The poles that come with cheap tents might break if they must withstand any form of wind. And most of the time, they are only mildly water resistant. You can buy a spray to help reinforce seams and make the rainfly more water proof, but I think it's better to spend a little bit more and get a good tent.

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A good tent is going to last you a very long time when kept clean and stored properly. Any tent that you can buy at REI is a quality tent. If you are looking for a slightly cheaper tent with decent

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quality, Coleman tents are good. However, if you are going to primarily backpack, a standard Coleman tent might be too heavy. For good prices on Coleman tents, try Dick's Sporting Goods.

My first tent I picked up at a used gear store in Charlotte. I bought some seam sealer and was good to go for several years. I was lucky because it never rained on any of my camping trips until earlier this year while camping in Big Bend. My tent completely leaked and my bedding got wet. Luckily, I had an extra rain fly in the car (we were car camping) so my gear didn't get too wet. My next tent will be a new quality because I know it will work for the next 20 years.

Hydration Pack (aka Camelback) ...Okay to go cheap

My first camelback lasted 16 years. In fact, the only reason it started to get beat up is because I started taking it kayaking with me. The water and dirt really did a number.

So when I went to get a new Camelback, I was shocked at how much the prices had increased. \$100 - \$140 for a Camelback! I couldn't do it.

At Academy, I found a hydration pack made by BCG. The 100oz pack was \$39.99. I couldn't resist. I had to try it. I'm about 2 years in, and I couldn't be happier. It does everything I need it to do, doesn't leak and has even stood up to raccoons trying to get into one of the pockets while camping at Goose Island State Park! I can tell the material is not as durable as the real Camelback so I can't say I'll get the same 20 years. However, when you are just building up your gear, the BCG hydration pack is well worth the \$60-\$100 savings.

Sleeping Bag ...worth it to spend the money

You will have your sleeping bag for a long time. When you spend money on the bag, you are usually buying degrees and compactability. The colder weather you want to sleep in and the lighter you want the sleeping bag, the more expensive the bag usually. The standard Coleman sleeping bags that you used for sleep overs are typically around 60 degree bags. That means you will be warm up to 60 degrees. You can add more layers (baselayer, hat, scarf, socks, etc) to use it in colder weather or you can spend more money on a warmer bag.

My bag is 24-degree bag. I have used it in 60-degree weather (unzipped) and 30-degree weather. I like it best in 40 degrees. If you are going to camp in cooler weather (less than 60) I recommend getting a mummy bag and get a bag that you just fit in.

If the bag is too big, the extra air will make it colder at night. The mummy bags synch around your head, keeping you warmer!

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To protect your sleeping bag even more, buy the silk lining for the inside. This lining will help preserve the materials in your sleeping bag. And you can just wash the lining after camping.

Baselayer ... Both

Smart Wool has great baselayers; but it is expensive. About \$80-\$100 for 1 baselayer shirt. I know a lot of people who only buy Smart Wool because it's that good and worth the money. I haven't been able to bring myself to do it yet.

For my baselayer, I use the BCG Cold Weather Shirt at Academy, between \$15-\$20, it is wicking and keeps you warm in the winter. Wear it under a vest, ski jacket, fleece or at night to stay warm and cozy. BCG also makes Cold Weather pants which are great for at night or under your hiking pants. The BCG baselayer weights more than Smart wool. Smart wool likely keeps you a little cooler when things warm up. Over the BCG shirt, I wear a short sleeve shirt so if things warm up, I take off the baselayer.

Light Weight Jacket ... Buy quality but look for deals

For a long time I bought cheap jackets. Then either the wind whipped right though it or it got drenched with a little rain. Then I found the REI Fleece. I love the REI Windbrake Fleece. At about \$100, it is about \$40-60 cheaper than the North Face version.

The REI windbreak is light weight and will keep you warm. Layer it with a baselayer, scarf and gloves and I have been comfortable down to about 45 degrees. It is also breathable so it's still comfortable in 60-70 degrees. Under 45 degrees and I switch a Columbia Ski Jacket (with arm pit zippers) – sometimes with the REI fleece under it.

Rain Jacket ... Buy quality but look for deals

Light Weight – I found my rain jacket on the clearance rack at REI for \$60. For a light weight jacket, I wanted one with armpit zippers. This helps keep you cool if it's raining on a warm day. The one I found is made by Marmot and I love it. It folds up small so if you are in doubt about the weather, it's not a big deal to take it with you.

Trench – Moving to Houston and working in Corporate America, I also wanted a rain coat that I could wear at the office & on the trail. I got the REI Trench Coat. This coat is a little bit thicker so it's better on cooler days. What I really like about it is it is wind resistant up to 60mph! I do recommend wearing long sleeves under it on cooler days because the air can make the material inside cold. Also, if it's raining really hard, your pants will get wet where the jacket stops from

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the run off of the jacket. So if you ever see a rain jacket where the bottom “poofs” out a little, I would recommend it to keep your pants dry.

Head lamps ...Okay to go cheap

Depending on what you will be using the headlamp for, it is usually okay to go cheap. If you are going caving or doing something extreme and your headlamp is your only source of light, I would get a better one. Other than that, you can buy a 4 pack at Academy

Socks ...Worth it to spend the money

I only wear smart wool and socks like smart wool. Smart Wool keeps your feet dry and warm. As it gets hotter, smart wool can also keep your feet cool. I try to wait until they are on sale and then buy several pairs. A couple of times a year, REI has 15-20% off. Get a few different thicknesses and you are set for all seasons.

Car Camping Cookware ... okay to go cheap

Coleman one burner, two burner, propane grills or dutch ovens all work. The gear you buy for car camping depends on what type of cooking you want to do. When I car camp, I bring 2 dutch ovens, a tripod, a Coleman 1 burner and my Jet boil.

Backpacking Camping Cookware ... worth it to spend the money

When you are backpacking, weight is everything. And little things add up quickly. Titanium cookware is expensive but really light. If you can carry the extra weight, you can buy cheaper items. If weight is a concern, you'll need to spend a little more money. I like the Jet Boil as my cooking stove & cup. If you are backpacking, you can make your coffee, soup, MRE's, oatmeal, just about anything. The water boils in about 1 minute so it's quick, a good size, light weight and affordable. Bring a backup lighter for any stove you decide to purchase in case the ignitor button stops working.

There are usually trade-offs when opting for the cheaper version of a piece of gear. With every purchase, if you understand what the tradeoffs are, and you're okay with those tradeoffs, it will help you make the decision of when to invest and when it's okay to buy on a budget.

CAMPING 101: HOW TO SIMPLIFY YOUR FIRST CAMPING TRIP

Day 5 {video 5} Great places for your first camping trip

Where you camp is largely dependent on the weather and it goes back to the experience you outlined on day one. Some people like camping when it's cold; others like camping when it's hot.

We suggest that you do your first camping trip close to Houston. You're

Below, we have outlined some of our favorite places to camp by the season we like to go there.

Summer:



Garner State Park:

About 5 hours from Houston, Garner State Park runs long the Frio River. Frio means cold in Spanish so you're sure to have a refreshing swim year-round! While the temperatures get hot during the day (90's), in June, July and August the temperature is around the low 70's. Plan to find some shade during the day and bring PLENTY of water to avoid heat stroke. Then enjoy a night on the cooler side.

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Other goods spots for Summer are Pace Bend, Inks Lake, and Kruse Springs.

Fall & Spring

Pretty much all parks are great for the Spring and Fall. Some are cooler than others so you'll want to check the average temperatures for each area and pick one that meets your needs.

Our favorites close to Houston are:

[Lake Livingston State Park](#)



Kayak, Canoe, stand up paddlebard, fish or bring your boat out! It can get windy on the lake so if you're paddling, stay close to the shore in case you start having trouble paddling back.

The water only spots are my favorite but there are also some great spots in the Full RV hook areas. Full RV hook-ups have the best view of the lake from the campsites. But since I usually tent camp, the Full RV spots do not accommodate tent only camping groups well.

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Winter – Somewhere you can have a campfire,

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Camping Definitions:

Types of Camping:

Car Camping

With car camping, you don't need to worry about how much your equipment weighs. This is important because lighter equipment tends to be more expensive. You can bring as much stuff with you as your car can hold...and then some probably. You pack a cooler of food, wood for the fire, charcoal or propane for grilling, maybe an air mattress or cot. In addition to your tent, you might set up a hammock and holding chair.

Primitive Camping

With backpacking, everything comes down to how much does it weigh. First, you lay out everything you want to have on your trip. Then you see if it fits into your pack. If it fits into your pack, you get on the scale and see if the weight is something you are able and willing to carry. From there, you start to pare down. Do I really need this battery pack? Am I going to read once I set up camp? Every decision becomes is the weight worth carrying.

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