

Your complete guide to
fun in the great outdoors

Camping

FOR

DUMMIES[®]



Michael Hodgson

Founder and President,
AdventureNetwork.com

A Reference for the Rest of Us!™

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Camping For Dummies[®]

by Michael Hodgson



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About the Author

Recognized nationally for his poignant writing style, humor, and knowledge of the outdoors, award-winning journalist and author **Michael Hodgson** constantly seeks the wilder side in search of a good story or rip-roaring adventure, like when he captained Team Media in the inaugural Eco-Challenge 360-mile adventure race in Utah.

Michael currently works as a content editor for Planet Outdoors and is a founding partner in GearTrends LLC — www.GearTrends.com — the premier information Web site for new products and trends in the outdoor sport, snow sport, fitness, paddling, and bike markets. His other Web site — www.adventurenetwork.com — was recognized in 1999 as a USA Today Hot Site, a Featured Expert award winner, and a Golden Globe award winner.

Michael served as the gear editor for *Men's Health* magazine from 1997 to 1999 and during that time was also the on-air talent covering gear and trends for the nationally syndicated weekly program *Outside Radio Network*.

Michael's articles have appeared in *Backpacker*, *Outside*, *Men's Journal*, *Adventure Journal*, *Field and Stream*, *Outdoor Life*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*, among other periodicals. He has published 18 books on the outdoors. Prior to becoming a fulltime writer in 1988, Michael worked as mountain guide, outdoor education

instructor, and Nordic ski instructor; as general manager of Western Mountaineering, an outdoor specialty store and sleeping bag manufacturer; and as a store manager for Adventure 16, a highly successful chain of outdoor specialty stores in Southern California.

When not behind a computer working on his Web sites, books, or magazine articles, Michael can be found paddling oceans, running trails, climbing mountains, or wandering the backcountry by himself or with his daughter Nikki and wife Therese. In other words, he gets paid to play — it doesn't get much better than that, does it?

Dedication

For my mother, who encouraged my first steps outdoors; my father, who guided my feet on wild trails as I was growing up; my daughter, Nikki, who inspires me by seeing everything through fresh eyes; and my wife, Therese, whose loving smile and sparkle are my favorite hiking companions.

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Contents

[Title](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Why You Need This Book](#)

[How to Use This Book](#)

[How This Book Is Organized](#)

[Icons Used in This Book](#)

[Part I : Planning Your Escape](#)

[Chapter 1: What to Do and Where to Go](#)

[Determining Your Interests and Needs](#)

[Choosing Your Destination](#)

[Beginning the Firm Planning](#)

[Planning to Camp with Your Family](#)

[Taking Fido Along](#)

[Chapter 2: Outdoor Gear and Gadgets](#)

[Tenting Tonight!](#)

[The Ins and Outs of Sleeping Bags](#)

[Backpacks](#)

[Child Carriers](#)

[Stoves](#)

[Kitchen Kit](#)

[Lighting the Way](#)

[Beware the Invisible Murk](#)

[Axe and Saw](#)

[Comforts of Home](#)

[Chapter 3: Dress for Success](#)

[Managing Moisture and Comfort: The Base Layer](#)

[Keeping Your Feet Happy](#)

[Chapter 4: Wintering, Paddling, Biking](#)

[Winter Camping](#)

[Paddling Your Way through Wilderness](#)

[Touring by Mountain or Road Bike](#)

[Part II : Getting There Is Half the Fun](#)

[Chapter 5: Hitting the Road](#)

[Preparing Your Vehicle for the Trip](#)

[Packing According to Plan](#)

[Getting Ready to Head Out](#)

[Car Camping Survival Kit](#)

[Car Rack 101](#)

[Safeguarding Your Home While You're Away](#)

[Surviving the Drive](#)

[Entertaining the Troops for Sanity's Sake](#)

[Chapter 6: Setting Up Camp](#)

[Finding Camp](#)

[Pitching the Tent](#)

[Establishing the Kitchen Area](#)

[Locating the “Bathroom”](#)

[Keeping Your Site Clean](#)

[Shutting Down for the Night](#)

[Answering Nature’s Call at Night](#)

[Taking Down Camp](#)

[Part III : Camping Skills, Food, and Fun](#)

[Chapter 7: Skilling Up at Camp](#)

[Tying Knots](#)

[Dealing with Wildlife](#)

[Knife Sharpening 101](#)

[Building a Fire Safely and Responsibly](#)

[Repairing Your Gear](#)

[Chapter 8: Cooking and Eating in the Wild](#)

[Planning Menus, Making Lists](#)

[Outfitting Your Camp Kitchen](#)

[Stove Repair and Maintenance](#)

[Fuel Traveling Tips](#)

[Chow Down!](#)

[Catching, Cleaning, and Cooking Fish](#)

[Chapter 9: Taking a Hike](#)

[Preparing for Your Hike](#)

[Treading Carefully](#)

[Chapter 10: Fun, Games, and Photo-Ops](#)

[Anyone Bored? Slim Chance!](#)

[Watching Wildlife](#)

[Capturing Moments in Freeze-Frame](#)

[Buying and Using Binoculars](#)

[Part IV : Staying Safe, Staying Found](#)

[Chapter 11: Staying Found Simply](#)

[Use Your Eyes, Ears, and Nose](#)

[Understanding Your Map](#)

[Buying a Compass](#)

[Navigation Basics: Using Your Tools](#)

[Using the Global Positioning System](#)

[Honing Your Survival Skills](#)

[Chapter 12: Weathering the Outdoors](#)

[Predicting Weather Changes by Reading Clouds](#)

[Geographic Weather Variations](#)

[Turning to Mother Nature for the Forecast](#)

[Surviving Weather Emergencies in the Great Outdoors](#)

[Chapter 13: Health and Safety Are No Accident](#)

[Avoiding Nature's Nemeses](#)

[Coming to the Rescue with First Aid](#)

Part V : The Part of Tens

Chapter 14: Ten + One Survival Essentials

Metal Cup

Firestarter

Parachute Cord

Flashlight

Compass and Map

Knife

Emergency Blanket

Basic First-Aid Kit

Water Purification System and Two Water Bottles

Emergency Food

Someone Responsible — the Eleventh Essential

Chapter 15: Ten Low-Impact Camping Tips

Discover Your Place in the Woods — Don't Create It

Lose the Trappings of Civilization

Practice Proper Campsite Sanitation

Don't Use the Wilderness as Your Personal Toilet

Save a Tree: Use a Stove

Choose a Time and Place Least Crowded

Follow the Path Most Traveled

Pick Up after Yourself — Mother Nature Is Not Your Maid

Respect Other Cultures

Seek to Blend

[Learn about Leave No Trace](#)

[Chapter 16: Ten Camping Recipes](#)

[Hot Breakfast Cereal](#)

[Grilled Muffins with Cheese and Egg](#)

[Eggs Benedict](#)

[Mexican Spoon Bread](#)

[French Onion Soup](#)

[Tabouli Salad](#)

[Baked Steak Surprise](#)

[Fried Rice Whatever](#)

[Roasted Apple Dessert](#)

[Popcorn](#)

[A Winter Picnic](#)

[Broccoli Forest Soup](#)

[Ginger Tea](#)

[Chapter 17: Ten or So Camping Resources](#)

[Adventure Network](#)

[Mailing Lists and Newsgroups](#)

[Finding the Gear You Need](#)

[Outside Magazine](#)

[Backpacker Magazine](#)

[Riverworld.com](#)

[Princeton Outdoors](#)

[Find-A-Guide](#)

[Adventure Sports Online](#)

[Tubbs Snowshoes](#)

[Recreation.gov](#)

[Chapter 18: Ten Best Outdoor Destinations](#)

[Lightning Lakes: British Columbia](#)

[Picture Rocks National Lakeshore: Michigan](#)

[Glacier National Park: Montana](#)

[The Temagami: Ontario, Canada](#)

[All 'Round Ranch: Utah](#)

[Cumberland Island National Seashore: Georgia](#)

[Gates of Lodor, Green River: Utah](#)

[King Range National Conservation Area: California](#)

[Monongahela National Forest: West Virginia](#)

[Strathcona Park Lodge: Vancouver Island](#)

[Chapter 19: Ten Times Two: Hodgson's Twenty Laws of Camping](#)

[Part VI : Appendixes](#)

[Appendix A: Understanding the Outdoor Lingo](#)

[Appendix B: Before You Leave Home: Countdown Checklist](#)

[Camping Gear Preparation](#)

[Home Care, Pet Care, Itinerary](#)

[Planning Ahead: Did I . . . ?](#)

[In-Vehicle Essentials](#)

[Vehicle Preparation](#)

[Appendix C: Connections](#)

[Map Resources](#)

[Planning and Research Resources](#)

Introduction

We all need to go camping more. Life becomes simplified and pure in the wild places of our earth. Among the mountains, rivers, woods, and open spaces, city-bound inhibitions, dot-commonisms, and lifestyle complications slip away like excess baggage. The outdoors plucks at the fiber of instinct and rekindles a familial longing to breathe deeply the fresh pine-scented air and smile at the simple sound of wind whispering through trees.

But too often we head outdoors practically insulated from the natural world by a barrier of technology that was intended only to make our time outdoors safer and more pleasurable. Taken at face value, there is nothing wrong with breathable fabrics, portable ovens and pizza makers, full meals that reconstitute from nothing, backpackable espresso makers, and two-pound tents the size of a small house. Still, amid all the technology available, we must be careful not to lose sight of why we head outside in the first place.

By constantly fighting to protect ourselves from the elements and soften the edges of wilderness, are we in fact losing touch with the wildness we leave the city to find? This book helps you stay in touch with a wilder side and slow down your need-for-speed mentality so that you can find a personal listening point.

I hope that as you thumb through these pages, you find the time to seek the lessons and gifts the wild places of our earth have to offer. I pray that you get to enjoy, as I frequently do, the feel of a spring shower on your face, the sensation of a snowflake on your tongue, and the playful tug of a mountain wind through your hair. After you discover your personal sense of wildness, you will be able to draw inspiration and meaning from it time and again, whether you're standing on a city corner waiting for the traffic light to change or hunching over a campfire watching a sunset's warm rays trace wistful lines up a canyon wall.

Why You Need This Book

Going camping has never been so easy — or more confusing — than it is now. The product choices available to you are mind-boggling, to say the least. There are literally hundreds of stoves, tents, jackets, shoes, lights, packs, sleeping bags, and more, all made from space-age materials that claim to do marvelous things — short of actually setting up camp for you and serving dinner on a platter.

If you're a novice who's just starting to put together a camping kit, then you can depend on *Camping For Dummies* to cut through all the techno-garble you're likely to hear in stores and online and to point you to the right purchases for your needs and budget. And even if you're the kind of person who has trouble telling north

from south (and perhaps left from right on occasion), I can help you to navigate the wilderness — and live to tell about it.

If you're a more experienced outdoor adventurer and already have all the gear you need, more power to you. In that case, you can depend on *Camping For Dummies* for tips and technique advice to help you become the star of any camping trip. No, I can't promise to turn you into a modern-day John Muir or Daniel Boone. I can, however, teach you how to prepare a delicious dinner over coals, anticipate weather changes before a storm hits, repair a broken tent pole, or start a fire with one match (just don't use this book as a fire starter). Throughout the book, I suggest resources that can help you find all the maps, new gear, repair information, guidebooks, and camping reservation assistance you can stomach.

How to Use This Book

Do not read this book in one sitting! If you do, I'll be forced to smack you with a copy of the book, should I run into you at a campground or trailhead. *Camping For Dummies* is designed as a pick-and-choose resource for you. It is *not* the next great American novel. I trust that you will skim, poke, and probe the pages, seeking out the information that interests you and leaving the rest to remain as ink stains on bound paper — at least for now. Thumb through the pages, letting the catchy icons — explained in a bit — garner your interest or the section

titles grab your attention. The Table of Contents is very detailed to help you decide what is of the greatest importance to your experience, plans, and needs. A very comprehensive index at the back of the book helps you search for topics by keyword.

How This Book Is Organized

Here's a part-by-part synopsis of what you can find in each section of the book:

Part I: Planning Your Escape

Every trip has to start somewhere, and this section is all about beginnings. Here I share resources for finding maps, making camping reservations, and deciding where to go and what to do anywhere in the United States or Canada. I also include information about what you need to pack for almost any kind of camping adventure and how to dress for your outing to make sure that you maximize comfort and minimize suffering. The bonus in Part I, “Wintering, Paddling, Biking,” is designed to stretch the imagination of more experienced campers.

Part II: Getting There Is Half the Fun

Too many trips end as soon as they begin simply because one essential factor is not anticipated and planned for: the trip to the destination. I smooth the path with advice on how to prepare your vehicle so that it gets you where you want to go, how to properly pack all your gear so that Grandma doesn't have to hold the camp stove and straddle the kayak all the way there, and even how to keep the kids (or people who just act like kids) amused while journeying to the campsite. I also include tips for picking a campsite and selecting the best spots for tents, kitchens, and more.

Part III: Camping Skills, Food, and Fun

Camping is *not* about eating burnt food. In this part, I show you how to plan a menu, prepare a meal, and even clean and serve fresh fish, whether you are cooking over a camp stove or open flames. Not sure of your camping skills? No worries, mate. From coping with wildlife to repairing gear and tying knots, I teach you enough campcraft skills to have you dreaming of living off the land — almost. I also explain how to enjoy a walk through nature without wrecking the wilderness and how to entertain the troops with fun and games that can make every outing a memorable one.