

What to pack when you camp from your car

By Kari Bodnarchuk
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

On our wilderness adventures, my husband and I carried backpacks not much bigger than a teenager's book bag. We toted a tent that packed to the size of a bread loaf, used feather-light cookware including a titanium pot, bowl, and spork, slept on weight- and space-saving mattresses that stopped at our knees, and heated dehydrated meals on a stove that fit into the palm of my hand when packed. Our decadent backcountry treat was a travel-size French press.

A child changed all that.

Now, we use a tent that has a footprint nearly as big as my home office, sleep on bedrolls that are the size of our old backpacks when stored, and grill burgers on a fancy no-stick propane stove in an elaborate kitchen that even comes with a sink. Once we adopted family car-camping, we embraced it — and all of the elaborate gear — wholeheartedly. Here are some of our favorite picks.

The **Big Agnes King Creek 6** tops our list for luxurious car-camping digs. With 86.5 square feet of floor space, it should be roomy enough to swallow your family, the neighbor's kids, and all your bedtime creature comforts. This palatial, free-standing shelter sleeps six people — or several adults and a handful of munchkins — stands 6 feet tall, and has two large half-mesh doors that provide easy access and added ventilation when the temperatures spike or the space is packed. But its crowning glory are the two vestibules, one of which is so spacious (110.25 square feet) that it can serve as a mud room, hangout spot (there's room for a card table and chairs), and gear storage vault, where you can stash your bikes, kitchen equipment, and other gear if you are out for the day.

The cream-colored roof helps brighten the living space, and the interior has ceiling loops for suspending your lantern and a gear loft (both sold separately), and oodles of large mesh pockets for storing headlamps, trail maps, Dr. Seuss books, and other essentials.

We have slept on foam bedrolls, Australian swags, cots, and expedition-style blow-up mattresses over the years. **Therm-a-Rest's DreamTime mattress** blows them all away and is so comfortable, I actually got a good night's sleep while eight months pregnant. The 3.5-inch luxury bed has a self-inflating sleeping pad that is topped with a body-hugging Isotonic Memory Foam layer and a soft microfiber slipcover. Added bonus: The cover is machine washable.

If you already own a camping mattress and it measures no more than 30-by-77-by-3½ inches, consider getting the **DreamTime Comfort Cover**, which is simply the DreamTime mattress system without the inflatable pad. You can slip your mattress inside the cover and get the benefits of the memory foam layer and microfiber top.

Deuter's Little Star EXP and **Starlight EXP** grow with your kids, so you don't have to buy new sleeping bags year after year. Both mummy-style bags have an expandable "footbox" that extends the length of each bag by



LUCKY BUMS

MOON CAMP CHAIRS

GET PACKING
See the gear you will want to fit into your car next camping trip at www.boston.com/travel.

12 inches. Just unzip the bottom of the bag and the Little Star EXP expands from 37 to 49 inches (good for children up to 40 inches tall), while the Starlight EXP expands from 63 to 75 inches (to fit anyone up to 67 inches). The bags have a soft nylon outer fabric, a micro-fleece lining, and a high-loft synthetic fill that stands up to wear and tear. And the bags are more affordable than many of their low-tech, character-themed equivalents.

When making s'mores or lazying around the campsite, children can kick back in **Lucky Bums' Moon Camp Chairs**. These padded, collapsible chairs, made by a company that specializes in children's outdoor clothing and gear, suit pint-sized campers weighing up to 95 pounds, and their super-sturdy construction enables them to take a beating: Ours has withstood tantrums, tugs-of-war, and oversized users. Each chair comes with its own stuff sack for travel.

Kelty's Basecamp Kitchen takes luxury camping to a new level. This relatively lightweight (just under 18 pounds), fully-collapsible kitchen sets up in less than 10 minutes and comes with many home amenities: a deep shelf, decent "counter" space, and a two-tiered pantry. Add to that hooks for your grilling utensils or dish towels, a paper towel holder, and a wind screen for added protection. What really sets it apart are Kelty's handy **Binto bags** (sold separately), including a 16-inch-deep storage bag, a cooler, and a sink. They're made with a super-durable rip-stop polyester fabric, help keep your kitchen supplies organized, and even have shoulder straps for easy portability.

We love the kitchen because it frees up our picnic table. It's also sturdy enough to balance a pot of steaming pasta (the loaded Binto bags help weight the unit), yet portable enough to relocate around the campsite.

The **Primus Profile DUO stove** comes with one high-powered (12,000 BTU), adjustable burner that is ideal for boiling pasta, heating beans, or making morning pancakes, and a removable, nonstick grill (9,700 BTU) for cooking everything from hot



BASECAMP KITCHEN



PRIMUS

PROFILE DUO STOVE



GSI OUTDOORS

PINNACLE CAMPER COOKWARE

dogs to shish kebabs. The propane-fueled stove has piezo-style auto-igniting burners (so you can fire it up without using matches) and a built-in windscreen to keep your meals cooking.

GSI Outdoors' Pinnacle Camper cookware is like a set of matryoshkas (Russian nesting dolls that stack one inside an-

other). In this case, the compact cookware bundle contains two large aluminum pots that have plastic lids with built-in strainers (one of our favorite features), a nonstick frying pan, a collapsible pot handle, four virtually unbreakable plastic plates, four plastic bowls, and four insulated cups with lids, all of which pack

into a 9-by-4-inch heavy nylon waterproof pouch that doubles as a sink. Each individual place setting (plate, bowl, and cup) is also color-coded, so you can keep track of yours. As we discovered, the stackable unit can also provide hours of entertainment for curious toddlers.

Light up the night with **Black Diamond's compact, battery-powered LED lanterns**. The 250-lumen Titan can practically illuminate a mountainside (or so it seems), yet it won't blind campers, thanks to its frosted globe and reflector system. We use the smaller (80-lumen) Apollo model on the picnic table to light up dinner and card games (it has three foldable legs for added support), and the even smaller 45-lumen Orbit suspended inside the tent as a nightlight for little campers. You can dim the brightness of all three lanterns by pushing and holding the on/off button, a handy feature.

Finally, we bring an **iMainGo portable speaker system** for projecting lullabies or Baby Beethoven tunes into the tent to put mini campers to sleep. Our iPhone or iPod fits snugly inside the padded device, so it's protected if our toddler decides to play with her favorite apps. The compact unit will work with any device that has a 3.5mm connection.

iMainGo makes two speaker versions: the iMainGo X and iMainGo2. The X model offers superior sound, but it comes with a built-in proprietary battery that must be plugged into a wall socket or car jack to recharge (not always the handiest option while camping); the battery lasts about 12 hours. The iMainGo2, on the other hand, still offers impressive sound quality, yet it runs on two AAA batteries.

You'll need a voluminous trunk, a roof rack, or creative packing skills to transport your car-camping gear, but it will be worth it when you are making high-end campsite cuisine and then sleeping luxuriously under the stars.

Kari Bodnarchuk can be reached at travelwriter@karib.us.

Where to buy it . . .

Big Agnes King Creek 6
877-554-8975
www.bigagnes.com
\$450 at REI, EMS, and L.L. Bean;
Hilton's Tent City in Boston carries the four-person version for \$315.
Therm-a-Rest DreamTime
800-531-9531
www.cascadedesigns.com

Comes in two sizes: large, 25x77x3½ inches or extra large, 30x77x3½ inches.
DreamTime mattress system, \$190 (large) and \$210 (extra large) at REI, EMS, and L.L. Bean; \$171 (large) and \$189 (XL) at Hilton's Tent City; or buy the DreamTime Comfort Cover through Cascade Designs, \$80.

Deuter Little Star EXP and Starlight EXP
877-384-9252
www.deuterausa.com
\$69, Little Star EXP and \$79, Starlight EXP at REI.

Lucky Bums Moon Camp Chair
866-284-5831
www.luckybums.com
\$35 (small, up to 95 pounds) to \$45 (medium, up to 150 pounds).

Kelty Basecamp Kitchen
866-349-7225
www.kelty.com
\$140 at Buy.com; \$150 through Amazon.com.

Binto bags available at EMS (\$16, storage bin; \$45, kitchen sink) and Mountain-Sports.com (\$16, storage bag; \$25, cooler; and \$46, kitchen sink).

Primus Profile DUO
307-857-4700
www.primuscamping.com
\$95 at REI; \$105 at EMS; \$120 at L.L. Bean (available Aug. 12).

GSI Outdoors Pinnacle Camper
800-704-4474
www.gsioutdoors.com
\$120 at REI and EMS.

Black Diamond lanterns
801-365-5555
www.blackdiamondequipment.com
\$30 (Orbit), \$50 (Apollo), and \$80 (Titan) at REI and L.L. Bean; \$24 (Orbit), \$40 (Apollo), and \$64 (Titan) at Hilton's Tent City.
iMainGo
818-778-6170
www.imaingo.com
\$70, iMainGo X and \$40, iMainGo2; available at REI, EMS, Target.com, and Amazon.com.

Distilled on high for après-ski in Utah

PARK CITY, Utah — The world's only ski-in gastro distillery, at least as far as proprietors Dave and Jane Perkin know, sits a block west of Main Street at the bottom of Park City Mountain Resort's aptly named Quittin' Time ski run. The High West Distillery & Saloon produces five types of whiskey and two types of vodka using a funky copper pot-column still.

"It's Willie Wonka meets Jules Verne," restaurant manager Pete Barquin says of the 250-year-old, German-made still. "The joke is the Oompa Loompas come out at night and clean it."

The hybrid still produces an oat whiskey and four types of rye whiskeys, including the award-winning Rendezvous Rye, which is a 6- and 16-year-old blend. It also makes peach vodka from locally sourced fruit, and Vodka 7000 (so-called because it is distilled at 7,000 feet), which is "the only commercially produced vodka we know of that's made from oats," says Barquin.

Sample all this in the cavern-



KARI BODNARCHUK FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Chef James Dumas and the still at High West Distillery & Saloon in Park City, Utah.

ous yet comfortable saloon located in an old livery stable for the horses used to haul ore carts out of the area's mines in the early 1900s. Or go next door to the attached two-story Victorian house, which was built in 1914 and recently restored. Here, relax

in the parlor, one of two cozy dining rooms, or at a bar made of reclaimed wood from the Great Salt Lake Trestle Bridge of 1904.

Executive chef James Dumas serves western-influenced favorites using spirits made by the craft distillery and local, seasonal ingredients, like the bison in a silver whiskey porcini sauce (the silver whiskey is an unaged oat whiskey). Children in the family-friendly restaurant can choose from pasta dishes to chicken schnitzel, washed down with a Roy Rogers or Calamity Jane "mocktail" (grenadine- and cherry-flavored sodas, or mixed with cranberry juice).

High West hosts special tasting dinners throughout the year, but non-liquor drinkers take heart: The distillery serves 35 wines by the glass, local beer, and homemade lemonade.

KARI BODNARCHUK

Free tours Tue-Sat 3 and 4 p.m. High West Distillery and Saloon, 703 Park Ave. 435-649-8300. www.highwest.com. Small plates \$8-\$13, entrees \$14-\$30.

Hate to Fly?

Cruise Round-trip from Boston, Massachusetts

Sail away to Bermuda, Canada or the Caribbean from under \$100 pp / per day!

NCL NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE®

7-Night Bermuda Cruises from Boston, MA from **\$499*** pp.

2-Night Cruise to Nowhere from Boston, MA from **\$309*** pp.

Royal Caribbean® INTERNATIONAL

7-Night Canada Cruises from Boston, MA From **\$699*** pp.

14-Night Caribbean Cruise from Boston, MA to Tampa, FL. (Return flight required) from **\$1,319*** pp.

Book Today & Receive FREE Onboard Credits + Travel Insurance at no extra Cost!

Direct Line Cruises Inc.

Official Agency for the Cruise Industry

Call Now for FREE Brochures or to Reserve your cruise vacation for the LOWEST fare:

1-800 DLC-8088

www.DirectLineCruises.com

*Rates shown above apply to select sailings and are subject to availability. Government taxes & fees are additional.