

SundayTravel

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

Boston Sunday Globe July 28, 2024 | [BOSTONGLOBE.COM/TRAVEL](https://www.bostonglobe.com/travel)

Our 10 favorite campgrounds in New England

By Diane Bair and Pamela Wright
Globe Correspondents

Lakes, mountains, and the seashore beckon: Here are some suggestions for getting outside and staying there

There are hundreds of campgrounds in New England, from primitive, walk-in sites to resort-style properties, and everything in between. Here are 10 of our go-to spots across the region's six states. Admittedly, this only scratches the surface of what's out there. Let us know some of your favorites, and we'll consider including them in a future story.

Yogi Bear's Jellystone Glen Ellis

Glen, N.H.

This award-winning campground in northern New Hampshire pretty much has it all: location, gorgeous sites, a slew of activities, and a knowledgeable, friendly staff. It's pretty, too — set between the Saco and Ellis rivers, with views of the surrounding White Mountains. And no matter what style of camper you are, there's an option for you here, including rustic, riverfront tent sites, cabins and glamping pods, and full hook-up RV sites. Families love the water park with 165-foot-long slides, swimming pools, mini golf, play areas, and planned activities, like gem mining, arts & crafts, river tubing, and more. You're also close to hiking trails and popular spots, like Story Land, Mount Washington, and North Conway. 603-260-9582, www.glenellisjellystone.com

Westward Shores

Ossipee, N.H.

Bring your boat! There's a marina at this luxury campground on the shores of Lake Ossipee, along with indoor and outdoor pools, a snack bar, camp store, community pavilion, and more than 2,000 feet of sandy beach. This is camping in style, with full hook-up RV sites and a variety of luxury cabins, sleeping from two to 20, most with full kitchens or kitchenettes. There are sports courts aplenty, including tennis and pickleball courts. Did we mention that pets are welcome? They even have a dog park and a dog beach. 603-301-4316, www.westwardshores.com

Hermit Island

Phippsburg, Maine

Breathe in the salt air and listen to the clang of buoy bells and the crash of surf as you nod off under an inky sky. This privately owned island campground on Casco Bay, about an hour north of Portland, is perfect for campers who don't mind a little rusticity, in trade for a spectacular ocean setting. Each tent site (small pop-ups and truck campers also allowed) comes with a picnic table and firepit. There are also three cabins, sleeping four to five people, and a yurt with a wood platform and screened windows. Spend your days hiking trails and backroads around the island and hanging out at the beaches. 207-443-2101, www.hermitisland.com

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VISIT MAINE

New England is filled with hundreds of scenic campgrounds to suit all tastes.

Game-changing gear for your next camping trip

By Kari Bodnarchuk
Globe Correspondent

Everyone has a different idea when it comes to enjoying the outdoors. Whether you're interested in ultralight backpacking gear, plush camping options, road trips, or gadgets that put a totally new twist on family campfire night, check out what's new or notable this summer. We've pulled together some of the season's top picks and a couple of must-consider items that have been around longer for good reason.

A palatial tent

If you plan to plant your tent poles in one spot for the summer — whether that's your backyard



LIFE INTENTS

or a seasonal campsite — check out Life InTents' new Zephyr 16-foot bell tent. This 200-square-foot tent fits up to two queen-size mattresses or eight sleeping bags. It has six arch-shaped

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Life InTents' new Zephyr 16-foot bell tent offers 200 square feet of floor space.

Inside

V.I.P. LOUNGE

HELPFUL HINTS

Young adult mystery writer Karen McManus on her newest book, Greta Gerwig, and learning to pack light

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A STAY IN BELFAST

The often-bypassed coastal town in Maine is a hip little enclave with a rich maritime history

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Steps you can take to make hiking with kids more fun for all

By Kari Bodnarchuk
Globe Correspondent

Our kids went on their first backpacking trip at 3 and 5 years old, a ¾-mile forested hike to a beach on the Olympic Peninsula where we pitched tents on the sand and spent days hiking the shoreline and exploring tidepools. The kids carried their own packs — my 3-year-old's backpack simply held his diapers and camp mattress — and quickly learned how to filter water, set up camp, and pee in the bush.

Fast forward a decade. Our kids, now 13 and 15, still join us for daytrips and an annual multi-day hike that's long

enough to require food resupply stops along the way. We've backpacked hundreds of miles over the past couple of summers, exploring mountainous trails near our home in Washington state to remote areas in British Columbia where we didn't see anyone for a couple of days. We've had carefree moments of chatting along the trail and stressful times as we've traversed steep snowfields, forded raging rivers, and spooked a black bear nestled in a bush. One 10-day hike included 27,000 feet of vertical gain (we slept well at night).

Some of us have loved every minute of it. Others have wanted to get airlifted out (permanently or maybe just for a quick burger

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VISIT MAINE

Beautiful sunsets are one of the pleasures of camping at Schoodic Woods, on the quiet Schoodic Peninsula in Maine.

Top 10 campgrounds

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Schoodic Woods

Winter Harbor, Maine

Love the ocean-to-mountains scenery of Acadia National Park but hate the crowds? This campground, the newest in the park, is located on 203 wooded acres on the less crowded, quiet Schoodic Peninsula. The are full hook-up RV sites, but if you prefer more privacy and space, the tent and small RV sites, or even the primitive hike-in sites, might be more to your liking. There are ranger-led programs, and hiking trails that leave from the campground. Bike or drive the Schoodic Peninsula Loop Road, a 6-mile jaunt with lots of scenic outlooks, or hop on the park's free Island Explorer shuttle bus that makes several stops along the peninsula. But there is a potentially deal-breaking caveat: there are vault and flush toilets but no showers or laundry. 207-288-3338, www.nps.gov/acad/planyourvisit/schoodic-woods-campground.htm

Grand Isle State Park

Grand Isle, Vt.

Water, water, everywhere! Located on South Hero Island (a.k.a. Grand Isle), this campground, the second largest and most popular state park in Vermont, has 4,150 feet of shoreline along Lake Champlain. There are kayak rentals, a swimming beach, boat launch, and a nature center with guided programs. There are more than 150 tent and lean-to sites, and four cabins for rent (no full RV hook-ups). Lots of people spend their week-long vacation here (Burlington is about 20 miles away), but overnigheters are welcome, too. 802-372-4300, www.vtstateparks-visit.com

Little River State Park Campground

Waterbury, Vt.

Can't decide between hiking and biking and beaching? You can do it all from this large state park campground located in the Mt. Mansfield State Forest on the shores of the Waterbury Reservoir. You can access miles of hiking and mountain biking trails from this campground, through forests, along brooks, and to historic sites. Or spend your day at the swimming beach. There's also a boat launch and nature center. The campground is clean and simple, with around 80 spacious tent and RV sites (no hook-ups), some on or overlooking the water, 20 lean-tos, and five cabins. There are also more than 25 remote waterfront campsites available on a first-come, first-served basis that are only accessible by boat. 802-244-7103, www.vtstateparks-visit.com



DIANE BAIR FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Visitors at Nickerson State Park flock to Flax Pond.

Nickerson State Park

Brewster

We'd be remiss (and receive tons of reader complaints!) if we didn't include this Cape Cod beauty. It's a favorite among locals and visitors alike, an outdoor lover's paradise, sprawling more than 1,900 acres with forests and fields, punctuated by eight freshwater kettle ponds. There are eight camping areas in the park with more than 400 sites. Spend your days boating (rentals available), swimming, fishing, and biking the more than eight miles of paths, some connecting to the Cape Cod Trail. There are guided nature programs, too. 508-896-3491, www.mass.gov/locations/nickerson-state-park

Horseneck Beach State Reservation

Westport Point

Camping here means you have easy access to one of the most popular (and pretty) beaches in the Massachusetts state park system. The campground, with some 100 tent and RV sites, is surrounded by 800 acres of barrier beach and salt marsh. There are nice views of Buzzards Bay from the 2-mile-long beach, and plenty of activities to keep you amused, including swimming, fishing, rock-hounding, and shell hunting. Don't miss a walk to Gooseberry Island, a barrier island with trails, sandy beach, and remnants of a World War II tower. 508-636-8817, www.massdrcamping.reserveamerica.com

Fishermen's State Park & Campground

Narragansett, R.I.

This popular campground, set on the site of former Fort Greene protecting the west side of Narragansett Bay, is a great base for exploring the area. It's about a mile to the Block Island ferry and only a 30-minute or so drive into Newport. A handful of pretty state beaches are also nearby, including Scarborough State Beach, Sandy Brine State Beach, and Roger Wheeler State Beach. The campground, set on 91 acres, has tent and full hook-up sites, sports courts, a playground, and its own sandy beach. Dusk is a great time to be back at the campground to enjoy brilliant sunsets over Narragansett Bay. 401-667-6200, www.ri-parks.ri.gov/campgrounds

Rocky Neck State Park

Niantic, Conn.

Thousands of beach-goers flock to this 710-acre state park on Long Island Sound, surrounded by expansive salt marshes and a tidal river. Lucky you if you've reserved one of the campsites, where you'll have easy access to the beach (and get to stay longer than those day-trippers)! There are 160 simple sites (no hookups), each with a picnic table and fire ring. There are also three rustic cabins to rent. Step outside the campground and you'll find a 5-mile system of paths and boardwalks with outlooks and observation platforms, a sandy beach, biking paths, picnic areas, and some great fishing and crabbing. 860-424-3200, www.ctparks.com/parks/rocky-neck-state-park

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Some game-changing camping gear

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mesh windows so you feel connected to the outdoors and — thanks to a clever new a-frame pole design opposite the door — a large picture window for added views and ventilation. The waterproof tent, made with heavy-duty mold- and fire-resistant cotton canvas, comes with a detachable waterproof floor. It has a 9.8-foot-tall center pole so even the tallest people have overhead space, 11 wall poles that prevent sagging, and four internal wall pockets for keeping gear organized. Several features may help lengthen your camping season, including a ceiling stove jack that accommodates up to a 6-inch wood stove pipe, an air conditioner wall jack for an A/C exhaust hose, and two zippered access points for electrical cords. The tent weighs just over 100 pounds and comes with a storage bag to keep everything organized off-season. It's available in a 19-foot version, too. \$1,600-\$1,915. www.lifeintents.com



TOMAH WHITNEY

This camping bed feels like home

If you've ever slept in an Australian swag or "cowboy-style" under starry skies, you'll appreciate Born Outdoor's new Badger Bed 30. This durable, four-season bedroll — made with weather-resistant fabric — is like the RV of camping beds: It's ready to go with minimal setup and feels like home. The bedroll unzips from either side for easy access and ventilation. Slip a piece of foam or any camp mattress up to 30 inches wide inside the Badger Bed and then choose your layers based on the conditions and your sleeping style: Add bottom and top sheets, blankets, quilts, or a sleeping bag and your favorite pillow. Come morning, just deflate your mattress, roll up the bed (with mattress and bedding in place), and stow the bed until nighttime. The bedroll has a waterproof base, padded sidewalls that help the whole setup maintain shape, and — my favorite feature — an extra flap of material that extends above the head area and serves as a great resting spot for shoes, a book, or other small items. \$390 for 25-inch-wide version; \$400 for 30-inch version; or choose a bundle (\$755-\$825) that includes a Therm-a-Rest MondoKing XXL camping mattress, lightweight or heavy sheets and quilt, and the bedroll. www.bornoutdoor.com



A lightweight, durable backpacking tent

If you're a minimalist, weight-conscious backpacker who cares about the Earth, you'll love NEMO's new Mayfly OSMO, available in two- and three-person versions. The semi-free-standing three-person tent (our top pick, even for two people) offers 37.9 square feet of floor space, two doors, plenty of vestibule space for boots and packs (17.2 square feet total), a durable ripstop floor that means a footprint isn't essential, and mostly mesh walls for superb ventilation. Pitch it using a Y-shaped pole and a short cross pole that helps lift the ceiling and create vertical walls to boost overhead space (42 inches at peak height) and offer a sense of airiness. Short semi-rigid "legs" in the corners at the foot end provide stability and a more-defined space — and help shave tent pole weight. The yellow rainfly, made from PFAS-free recycled OSMO fabric — a proprietary polyester and nylon blend — brightens up the interior and keeps it cooler when temps climb. The Mayfly weighs just 3 pounds 10 ounces, meaning you'll hardly notice your share of the tent when you divvy it up. The only downside: The tapered footprint — 88 inches wide at the head and 62 inches wide at the foot — means that for three people, you can only fit 20-inch-wide rectangular or else tapered mattresses. \$399.95 (2-person); \$459.99 (3-person). www.nemo-equipment.com



One sleeping bag for multiple seasons

No need to have cold- and warm-weather sleeping bags when one can handle all but the most extreme conditions. Big Agnes's Lost Ranger Ultralight 3N1 0-degree bag has been out for a couple of years, but it's one of my all-time favorites due to its versatility. The sleep system — made with 850-fill water-repellent down — comes with two bags for three different sleeping options: It has an outer quilt-like bag that provides loft on the top and sides and a built-in sheet on the bottom (and keeps you warm down to 45 degrees) and a mummy-style inner bag that's rated to 20 degrees on its own; combine the two bags together and you'll stay toasty down to zero degrees. I have used the bag — in various combinations — from balmy nights in the San Juan Islands to 0-degree nights on Mt. Kilimanjaro and have never been cold. The bag packs down to volleyball size using a compression sack (not included) and weighs just 2.94 pounds. It also comes in a 15-degree version that's rated 15 to 50 degrees and weighs 2.19 pounds. Retail for \$569.95 (15 degree) and \$669.95 (0 degree), but available for up to \$200 cheaper online. www.bigagnes.com

An invaluable tool for backpackers

We used to have a big collection of partially used backpacking fuel canisters, until we discovered FlipFuel's clever little Fuel Transfer Device. This tiny, 1.4-ounce device connects two fuel canisters (any 3.5- to 16-ounce isobutane-propane canisters) and then transfers fuel from one canister to the other. That way, you don't have to waste precious pack



ERIC FLOTTMANN

and warm/in one on top — and then twist the wire valve to initiate the fuel transfer. Use a small scale to help gauge how much fuel is left in each canister and how much to transfer so you don't overfill. \$35. www.flipfuel.co



Take outdoor movie night anywhere

You can still find drive-in theaters — from Wellfleet to Bangor — but they're not as common anymore. Create your own outdoor movie scene at your campsite or vacation home with Solo Stove's new Movie Night bundle. The bundle comes with two padded, ground-level reclining lounge chairs that come with a supportive metal frame for stability and a padded headrest — and work great for summer concerts and beach days, too. The bundle also includes a Vista projector screen that's big enough for easy viewing (76.25 inches tall by 90.15 inches wide) yet super portable (it weighs just 15.65 pounds and the aluminum frame and foldable screen pack into a handy carrying pouch), and a 3-quart mostly stainless-steel popcorn maker with a long handle so you don't burn yourself over the campfire. Buy the Movie Night Feature Bundle (without a fire pit) or choose a Movie Night Premiere Bundle with one of Solo Stove's smokeless fire pits, from the Ranger 2.0 fire pit (the most portable option at 15 inches in diameter) to the massive party-size Yukon 2.0 (27 inches wide); each fire pit comes with a stand, lid, and carrying case. \$649.99 (no stove; currently on sale for \$449.99) to \$1,099.99 (Yukon Premiere Bundle, currently on sale for \$989.99). www.solos-tove.com



A sleek new roof box

Load up everything from adventure gear to sandy beach wear in Thule's new Motion 3 roof box. This gear loft has a swoopy aero design that helps enhance fuel efficiency. It comes in five different sizes, including two new low-profile versions so you can choose the one that best suits your car and adventures (sizes range from the 400-liter XL Low to the 600-liter XXL). The Motion 3 opens on both sides and is easy to install on Thule (or other compatible) crossbars — position the clamps on the bars and twist the attached knob until it clicks (the built-in torque feature lets you know when it's secured). It's also a cinch to operate the roof box with one hand — just pinch to release the latch and push up on the wide handle to lift; then pull the interior strap to help close the lid, which clicks shut so you know it's properly secured. You can even accessorize your Motion 3 with Thule's new LED interior light, which attaches with the adhesive strap, works with one AA battery, and automatically turns on/off when you open or close the box. Roof box starts at \$949.95, light \$59.95. www.thule.com

Take this hot little multitool anywhere

Clip one of Outdoor Element's Firebiners onto your backpack and you'll have a handy multitool within easy reach whether you need to light the camp stove, cut a fishing line, or hang a bear bag from a tree. The slim, 1-ounce multitool carabiner — which cannot be used for climbing — comes with a small flathead screwdriver, safety utility blade, bottle opener,



and two replacement ferro rods for the tool's coolest feature: an Ever-spark fire wheel that you can spin with your finger to create a fire-making spark. Use the fire wheel to ignite a camping stove or the starter material for your campfire — dryer lint, paraffin-coated tinder, wood shavings, or store-

bought fire starters. The carabiner holds up to 100 pounds so you can use it to keep backpacks and food bags away from critters of all sizes. \$14.95-\$16.95. <https://outdoorelement.com/products/firebiner-carabiner>.

Enjoy this summer's adventures, whether you're bedded down in a plush bell tent, road-tripping with your roof box, or watching movies under a meteor shower.

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