

Backpacking new family sport

While there's nothing new about taking to the hills with a pack on your back or about loading up the station wagon with your growing collection of camping paraphernalia, there is a combination camping-backpacking activity that is finding favor with more and more families.

"Family backpacking," for lack of another term, is the kind of outdoor fun that combines the best of both worlds.

Many young people, many families even, with small children and a lot of not-so-young folks are discovering that a day or a short weekend on the trail is not only invigorating but extremely rewarding in being able to get away from it all and see some nature.

You don't need a remote wilderness area, a white-water river or a high mountain to enjoy family backpacking. Just an out-of-the-way trail away from the sight and sound of civilization will get you started. For an overnight trek, you'll need a plan for a camping area, food, water, cooking shelter and warmth.

When it comes to shopping for equipment, it's like any other activity . . . you can go from modest to high priced. But take a word from the experts and select a quality pack that will provide years of service such as the fine Hirsch-Weiss packs.

You'll find Hirsch-Weiss packs designed for the serious hiker, climber and expedition-type backpacker. If you're not ready to take on the Appalachian Trail or the Pacific Crest Trail, check your local sporting goods store where you buy hunting and fishing gear. You may be surprised at the large selection of good quality backpacking equipment.

The three major pieces of equipment you'll need for family backpacking are a backpack, a sleeping bag and tent. The latter two necessities, of course, only if you plan to stay out overnight. A little care in selecting each of the three will mean a lot of comfort and enjoyment later on, so be a little choosy and take a little time while shopping.

In selecting a backpack, the most important thing to do is to try the pack on right in the store, preferably with a load of 20 or 30 pounds inside. You'll find out in a hurry if the pack is comfortable to carry. As one experienced outfitter in Arizona said, "The real test of a backpack is 15 miles later."

Also check the features of the backpack. Basically, there are two types . . . the pack-and-frame combination for large loads and long treks and the smaller soft packs which are great for day hikes. Beyond this, each pack has its own peculiar features such as compartments that zip open around

three sides like a suitcase, various outside pockets and padded waist bands that help take some of the load off your shoulders.

You can buy sleeping bags for less than \$10 to more than \$200, with hundreds in between. For backpacking, weight is an important consideration, as is the warmth of the bag with you inside. Every person "sleeps" differently, some warmer, some colder. The manufacturer will show a temperature range for each sleeping bag but consider your own metabolism, whether or not you'll sleep in a tent or under the stars, the wind and, of course, the outside nighttime temperature. Most backpacking sleeping bags are mummy or modified mummy "tapered" companions, with nylon covers and linings and either down or polyester insulation.

In selecting a backpacking tent, again consider your own camping climate. If you're in an area where rain is very unlikely, you can get by with an ordinary water-resistant-but-not-waterproof tent, usually made of nylon. The fully waterproof tent, made of coated nylon, is losing favor because, while it keeps out the rain, an awful lot of condensation forms inside the tent which can get you almost as wet as the rain! Most popular is the tent-and-fly combination, which has an ordinary nylon

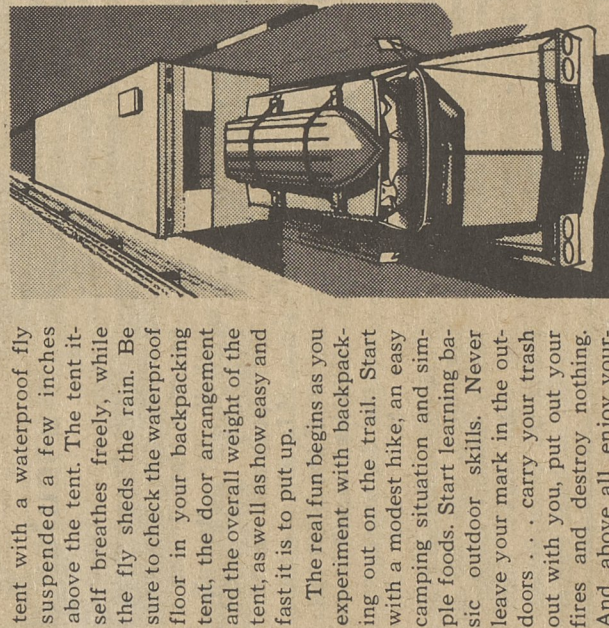
tent with a waterproof fly suspended a few inches above the tent. The tent itself breathes freely, while the fly sheds the rain. Be sure to check the waterproof floor in your backpacking tent, the door arrangement and the overall weight of the tent, as well as how easy and fast it is to put up.

The real fun begins as you experiment with backpacking, out on the trail. Start with a modest hike, an easy camping situation and simple foods. Start learning basic outdoor skills. Never leave your mark in the outdoors . . . carry your trash out with you, put out your fires and destroy nothing. And, above all, enjoy yourself!

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An out of the way trail, beyond the sights and sounds of civilization, is the basic ingredient of backpacking. A little research will usually turn up a location near you.



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RV vacations attract six million

Chantilly, Va.—Vacation styles are changing in America. Something has prompted about six million United States families to adopt recreation vehicles for their vacation travel rather than going the more traditional station-wagon-and-motel route.

Enthusiastic owners of these "RV's" give various reasons for their choice, including convenience, excitement, economy and camaraderie, according to the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, which represents the nation's RV manufacturers, suppliers and associates firms.

What could be more convenient than transferring your freshly pressed vacation clothes, as well as your socks and underwear, from your home to hangers and drawers in an RV and leaving them there until they're needed?

No more need to cram everything into luggage and to take out some of the wrinkled results each evening. And, in many RV's, large storage space permits carrying much more clothing and sports equipment.

Especially for large families, RV's reduce the hassle that can result from the inevitable, "I'm hungry!" The next scenic overlook, rest area or supermarket parking

lot can help solve the quick-lunch problem because modern RV's have facilities for storing food (even freezing it) and cooking or baking almost any menu that can be prepared at home. This is especially convenient for persons on special diets.

The predictable results of drinking and eating can be accommodated just as easily. "Self-contained" RV's also have hygienic odor-free toilets in cleverly designed bathrooms, complete with showers and often tubs as well.

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vehicles make possible prompt adults to enjoy them more often. So families participate and develop common interests and rapport often lacking in modern urban and suburban living.

A large number of RV-owning families schedule their vacations to be with members of RV clubs. One such organization, sponsored by an RV magazine, has more than 200,000 members in the U.S. and many other countries. Other groups conduct tours with up to 150 vehicles in convoy on the North American continent (and occasionally overseas).

Numerous booklets, pamphlets and other informative publications on recreation vehicles can be obtained, free of charge, by contacting the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, Box 204, Chantilly, Va. 22021.

Observation of the occupants of RV's in almost any park indicates that the vehicles bind families together. Youngsters, from pre-school through teenage, are especially susceptible to the excitement of RV travel. And the accessibility of Mother Nature's wonders which the rustic, dot the continent.

Recreation vehicles can make extensive travel economically practical for many families, although traditional auto travel has become very expensive. For example, in 1976 a family of two adults and two hungry teenagers traveling by station wagon would spend about \$1,022 for essentials on a two-week, 1,000-mile vacation, assuming \$30 per day for motel lodging and \$40 daily for restaurant food.

That same family need spend only about \$331 for an RV vacation of the same duration and covering the same distance, a saving of 67 percent. Although the cost of gasoline would be a bit higher with the RV, parking fees typically would be \$6.50 per night, and food, bought in supermarkets and prepared in the vehicle, would cost no more than at home—about \$11 a day, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. So the added cost of fuel is insignificant.

An RVing family which buys a low-cost vehicle and travels widely would save considerable money during the life of the RV. Of course, fixed costs such as depreciation and insurance for an infrequently used high-priced unit would overshadow the out-of-pocket saving. Yet many families use their units only occasionally but consider the cost an investment in convenience, excitement and camaraderie.

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