



No more room service: The life-changing magic of camping

Written by Anna Brech

Here's why you should trade your boutique hotel for a camping adventure this summer and embrace the romance of the wild outdoors.

Close your eyes for a minute and cast your mind back to the camping trips of your childhood...

Sure, there were less-than-glamorous moments. Maybe it rained relentlessly. Perhaps you tripped over the pee bucket and sent it cascading into the tent (hand in the air here).

But even then – amid the sweaty sleeping bags and the sandwiches with undertones of mould-meets-canvas – camping brought with it an undeniable thrill.

It was a place where you could become your very own wild thing, romping through grassy woodland and feeling at one with nature. Camping as a 10-year-old spelt escapism from the rules, and it has lost none of its wonder.

Say what you will about nice bathrobes and a turndown service, but even the finest hotel can't beat the smell of woodsmoke under a starry night sky. And here's why....

It's the most simple adventure on earth



Find yourself a good camp spot this weekend

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As we grow older, that carefree spirit that once governed us slowly begins to erode. Our lives become nothing but rules, as we pinball between an endless stream of emails, dinner dates and looming to-dos.

With the average Brit feeling stressed for nine full days a month, we yearn for an escape from the noise.

And camping provides exactly that. Pitching up in the middle of nowhere is like switching a radio off – suddenly there’s just you and the Great Outdoors.

Granted, you won’t have Egyptian cotton bedding or Michelin meals (unless your camping game is really on-point). But being outdoors offers headspace in a way that luxury hotels just can’t rival.

“We’re constantly checking our phones, answering emails and attending to our ever-growing to-do lists,” says **Chloe Brotheridge**, anxiety hypnotherapist and founder of calmer-you.com.

“Heading outdoors allows us to get away from it all and truly relax. Nature has a quality of stillness and peace. Connecting with this brings great tranquillity.”

Psychotherapist **Karin Peeters**, founder of [Vitalis Coaching](#), agrees.

“When I ask my clients to describe a moment in their lives when they felt safe, clear and calm, they often mention mountains, green meadows, oceans and lakes,” she says.

“The calmness of these places seeps into our own being. A sense of wellbeing overcomes us.”

- **We can unplug from the world**



Bryher campsite, the Scilly Isles

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In part, this calming effect is to do with the simplicity of camping.

“Being in nature helps us to connect with what's essential,” says Karin.

“We take little stuff with us and leave what's unnecessary behind. We realise we can do with so much less.”

It's also down to the ability to switch off.

Reception is often tricky in remote camping spots and charging can also be an issue. It's much easier just to down tools and bathe yourself in the magnitude of nature.

The more you do this, the calmer you'll become. That stress tic that connects you and your phone will gradually start to weaken.

“Modern times brings with it many external stimuli, which take us away from our inner world,” notes Karin.

When we are fully engaged in the present moment, the unimportant stuff drops away and we remember again what matters most.



Campers are a friendly bunch

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So, what to do with your newfound solitude?

Well, as anyone who has ever grappled to put up a tent together can attest, camping is one long exercise in team building.

Whether you're bedding down with your mates, your mum or a new amour, this is a chance to enrich your closest relationships.

Far from the distractions of everyday life, you can gather for sloe gin cocktails around a crackling woodfire or share deep conversations that last long into the night.

Camping is a great way to learn new skills together, too (a [proven recipe for happiness](#)).

“Suddenly we're wholly responsible for those basic needs again,” says author Joe O'Leary, who runs [wilderness survival courses](#) in the ancient woodland of Wiltshire.

“Dipping into bushcraft, wilderness living – whatever you want to call it, it takes you even further down that trail as you learn how to procure food and water, seek out shelter and provide warmth.”

It stretches your limits



Camping at the Enchantments, Washington State
© SCOTT KRANZ

But it's not just about practical prowess; when you're sleeping outdoors, the opportunity for action adventure is everywhere.

Sometimes this can be as part of the camping experience itself, like the pioneering tree-tents run by Cornwall's [Kudhva site](#) that allow you to tap into your inner Tarzan and literally swing between the canopy.

More usually, though, you'll find campsites have a set repertoire of activities to send your heartrate racing, either on-site or with local companies nearby.

You might find yourself white water rafting on [Tryweryn River in Wales](#), for example, or flexing your bungee skills with the fabled [Highland Fling](#).

Whether you're scrambling over [rugged ghylls](#) in the Lake District or tunnelling your way [through the caves](#) of Cheddar Gorge, camping is a time to joyously nosedive out of your comfort zone and embrace the Great Unknown.

Don't forget that many campsites run more mainstream options such as mountain biking or kayaking, too.

Rediscover freedom



Camp by the sea
© PIXABAY

Camping encourages us to be adventurous in a way that reinforces our ties to the wilderness.

As hunter-gathers, we lived and played in the Great Outdoors – it's how we're evolved. So, it's no surprise that returning to that lifestyle is a boon to happiness.

In fact, studies show that spending just five minutes in nature is enough to significantly boost your mood. And this effect is only amplified over the course of a long weekend.

“Nature calms the nervous system. We use up excess adrenaline when we're active and it promotes mindfulness,” says Chloe. “If we're able to tune into the sights and sounds of nature, it brings us into the present and away from anxieties about the future.”

Above all, camping represents freedom in our tightly choreographed lives. It's a way to tap into that carefree child we once were, before things became complicated.

“Spending time in the Great Outdoors reminds us of where we came from,” says Joe. “It makes you feel as though you're a part of the landscape rather than just a visitor – like coming home!”