



ADVENTURE CAMPING

What's a Guider to do? The girls want to adventure camp and/or trip.

November 18-20, 2016

Several Hints on Pitching a Dry Camp in the Wet

Most of us pack our kit in [waterproof bags](#) before loading it into a backpack, canoe or kayak. This is a good start. Keeping yourself and your belongings dry under way is one thing. Making camp in the rain is another and managing the transition from water or trail to bedroom while the heavens weep is the keystone in the arch. It's best to do things by the numbers. Each and every hiker /paddler will in time evolve his or her own routine, but here is one:

1. Choose a site with an eye to drainage and natural shelter. (But avoid camping next to the tallest trees in the woods during a thunderstorm.)
2. Secure gear/paddlers: the boat(s) against wind and wave. Beach campers should note the wrack line, and sea shore campers would do well to consult a tide table.
3. [String up a tarp](#). This gives you a dry place to muster your gear. Move gear to tarp.
4. If [your tent](#) is one of the self-standing breed, pitch it under the tarp.
5. Put groundsheet down where you want to sleep, pitch tent — a slight slope is better than a sag — then place a groundsheet inside. * use 1 or both (NB: Whatever your shelter, if it's raining hard, it's best to have the door near to the tarp, so that the tarp forms a sort of extended vestibule or porch. Take this into account when you choose where to pitch the tarp.#3)
6. Remove stuff sacks containing [air mattress\(es\)](#), [sleeping bag\(s\)](#), and [camp clothing](#) from the pack(s) and stow them in your tent. If tent and tarp are far apart — don't dawdle on the journey.
7. String up a [second tarp](#) some distance from the sleeping area to serve as your kitchen and dining room. In bear country, 150 feet is not too far to walk, even in a pouring rain.
8. Carry food packs and [kitchen pack](#) to the cook tarp.
9. Unpack your [stove](#) or [portable kitchen](#) and fire up — if you're cooking on a twig stove, you'll need to collect twigs/small sticks first or [build a fire in a fire pan](#). Put a pot of water on the stove for tea or soup.
10. Make a final inspection of the tents, boats and paddles. Are they [properly stowed](#)?
11. Hang your [rain gear](#) under the vestibule tarp to drip dry and change into your camp clothes. (If the rain is really bucketing down *or if you're camping in bear country*, you'll want to defer this step till you've eaten and hoisted your food bags.)
12. Prepare a [quick meal](#), eat it, [do the dishes](#) and [secure your food](#).
13. [Wash off the day's grime](#) — this is best done under the cook tarp — and prepare for bed.
14. Slide into your sleeping bag, bring your [trip journal](#) up to date and drift off to dreamland while listening to the rain drumming on the tent fly.

That's the executive summary, a few of the items on the list demand some elaboration, beginning with ...

#1. Location, Location, Location. Even if the rain has stopped when you're making camp, it could (read "will") return in the night. Every shallow depression will then become a lake, so [pick a tent site](#) that's on a slight rise or gentle slope. Don't waste time constructing trenches or other engineering works. These are illegal in most parks. Avoid campsites close to [flashy streams](#) — this includes dry washes in arid areas — and give thought to the combined effects of wind and tide if you're camping on a beach.



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#3. Tarp Tips. If you can spare the weight you will find that it's a great convenience to equip their home from home with both a porch *and* a kitchen. This is especially true when the rains continue without let-up, day in and day out. You'll also want to pitch the porch tarp so that water drains away from your tent. And mind the drip line. Gear stowed near the perimeter of a tarp or fly is protected from falling rain, it will likely be wetted (and dirtied) by splash.

#4. Groundsheet Rules. A groundsheet is a good idea even if your tent has a sewn-in floor (as almost all modern tents do). Some paddlers place the groundsheet inside the tent, where it can serve as second line of defense if the sewn-in floor springs a leak, but I prefer to put my tent on the groundsheet, so that the groundsheet protects the tent floor from soiling. (Packing up a muddy tent is a nightmare.) *I make very sure the groundsheet doesn't extend beyond the edge of the tent floor, though.* If it does, you'll find yourself tenting in standing water.

#12. Did You Remember to Pack a Towel? This is another luxury, but having a brisk rub-down with a towel before changing into your camp clothes can prove quite a treat during an extended spell of chilly, rainy weather. And speaking of camp clothes... Reserve cotton for towels. Wool, (synthetic) fleece and pile are your best friends in camp, as they are in your boat and on the trail. More than one backpacker/paddler has made the unpleasant discovery that [hypothermia](#) isn't confined to the shoulder seasons of spring and fall. And while we're on the subject, do I have to remind you of the importance of bombproof (or at least truly waterproof) rain gear? I didn't think so. But you might also find that an umbrella makes a good addition to your foul-weather wardrobe. It will protect both you and your gear as you dash between tarp and tent.

OK. You've weathered a rainy night, and since you had it on [good authority](#) that tomorrow would be another day, you were hoping that this new day would dawn sunny and clear. But [you wakened](#) to the sound of rain hammering on your fly. What next? What's the best way of...

Breaking Camp in the Rain?

The answer can be found in the routine for *making* camp that you've already established. Just play the tape backwards. Pack up sleeping bag, air mattress and spare clothing in your tent. Transfer these bagged items to the shelter of the porch tarp. Then strike the tent (move it under the tarp first, if practicable), shaking the water off the fly before packing up. The groundsheet, which can be relied upon to be both wet and muddy, should go into a separate sack. Once you've marshaled all this gear under the porch tarp, take the opportunity to don your paddling wardrobe, packing your (still dry and clean) camp clothes away. Any wet items go into a separate bag, along with washcloths and towels, to be dried whenever the opportunity presents itself. Now continue "playing back the tape in reverse." Retrieve your food bags. Cook and eat breakfast, wash any dishes that need washing and pack up your stove and utensils. Once that's done, shift the kitchen pack and food bags to the porch tarp and strike the cook tarp. Load your packs/boat(s). Strike the last tarp and stow it. And that's that.

By Tamia Nelson tamia@paddling.net July 14, 2015
<http://www.paddling.net/sameboat/archives/sameboat819.html>
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