



NATURE

Comfort campers, now's your time



ON THE MOVE

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With a little more than a month of glorious summer left, I urge everyone to hit our great outdoors. According to the 2015 North American Camping Report, an independent study supported by Kampgrounds of America Inc. (KOA), camping has made a comeback.

The fall in gas prices has resulted in people taking more road trips and those same people are spending more nights camping while they travel. Among campers who said that decreased

gas prices would impact this year's travel plans, 88 per cent say it would allow them to camp more often and 86 per cent were planning to visit new campgrounds. As well, 72 per cent of Canadian campers surveyed said they intended to visit a provincial park this summer.

If you are curious what nature has to offer, here are a few things to bear mind as you ponder a trip to the great outdoors.

Don't forget the Wi-Fi

You do not have to give up all of your creature comforts. More and more campgrounds, whether privately or publicly owned, offer a handful of campsites for the comfort camper, often complete with a proper bed and lin-

ens, chairs, lights, pots and pans and some sort of semi-permanent roof over your head.

Whether they are called yurts, round tent-like structures, or oTENTiks, Parks Canada's cross between an A-frame cabin and a prospector tent, most campgrounds offer an option for those reluctant to rough it.

Although traditionalists may prefer to be off the grid, campgrounds are starting to recognize that doesn't work for everyone.

The KOA study reports that when selecting which campgrounds to visit and stay at, free Wi-Fi ranks as the third-most important amenity, just behind clean bathrooms and a kid-friendly environment. Young-

er campers say having access to their smartphone is almost as important as toilet paper.

Camping will reduce your stress and improve your family relationships. A third of campers say that camping has a positive impact on their relationships with family and friends and their emotional well-being.

Setting up your tent and prepping meals is an adventure all members of the family can share, and sleeping outside, especially if it's for the first time, is exhilarating.

All it takes to have a successful camping vacation is a little planning. Parks Canada has a great checklist app that includes safety tips, recipes and first-timer advice.



A Kampgrounds of America site in Niagara Falls.

COURTESY KOA CANADA