

13 Tips for the - Campervan Trip

Looking to live your best #vanlife? Take this advice.

BY LINDSAY N. SMITH

THE CAMPERVAN CRAZE is sweeping the globe. Scan through your social media accounts, and you're bound to land on someone's trip through the Pacific Northwest, New Zealand, or Iceland in one of these **converted** vehicles. Their popularity makes sense. In these vans, which often feature miniature kitchens and beds that transform into dinner tables, travelers can enjoy both the comfort of modern luxuries and the freedom of the wild outdoors.

If you haven't taken a campervan trip for yourself yet, it's destined to make its way onto your **bucket list**. Here are 13 tips to keep in mind when planning your own adventure.

1. _____

Your camper won't do you much good if you can't get it off the **lot**. A van can be more challenging to drive than a car if you aren't used to the size and turning radius of a larger vehicle. Make sure you know how to drive the one you rent, and ask about manual versus automatic transmission before hitting checkout. If you haven't driven a manual car in the past, this is not the time to learn.

Take Advantage of the Flexibility

Don't forget about the van part of your campervan. Hopefully your new home is so comfortable, you forget you're spending the night in an automobile. If you can't quite get that fact out of your mind, remember the benefits of your choice. You're transient, flexible, and free. If you want to visit someplace new in the morning, you can just **pop into** the driver's seat and get a move on. You already have everything you need.

Keep an open mind while you're driving and hiking. If you see something interesting, stop. If a campsite neighbor tells you about an amazing hike she took the day before, think about extending your stay and trying it out. Allow yourself to enjoy the freedom the van provides.

2. _____

While it may seem like you can just camp anywhere with your van—after all, your bedroom is on wheels—it's best to consider your campsites beforehand. A bit of go-with-the-flow is necessary on a road trip, but you can eliminate plenty of stress by knowing where you'll be parking at each leg.

If you can't manage an exact plan, map out possible stopping points along your route. Once you have that information, you can take all the time you need on the road and choose the spot that's most convenient at the time

Bring Someone You Really Like

There's no way around it, you'll be in tight quarters. If you're going on this trip with a partner, family members, or friends, be sure you like them—a lot. If you aren't comfortable getting **cozy** together, you better hope you don't run into a rainy day on the road.

3. _____

Before you even show up for the van, take stock of what's included in the rental, make a list of what you'll need on the trip, and compare the two.

Once you pick up the camper, get a careful look at what's there. Make sure everything you expected to be inside the van actually is. If something is missing, ask about it. After you get the keys, take out your list and reassess your needs, then head to the store. A little preparation goes a long way here, because realizing you don't have any towels in the middle of the woods is not how you want to start your camping trip.

Don't Forget the Essentials

Yes, you have a car. But no, you don't want to spend your vacation time driving around to track down a can opener. In order to make sure you have everything you need, be thoughtful with those packing and shopping lists. Some suggestions: baby wipes, shampoo, a decent knife, a cutting board, sandwich bags or containers for **leftovers**, a little broom, bug spray, and sunscreen. Make the most of your trip by getting these things at the start, so you can focus on the fun.

4. _____

There's little joy in scrounging through an empty cooler at 8 p.m. after a long day on the trail. To prevent an empty belly or three straight dinners of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, do a little prep before you leave. Figure out how many meals you'll need and decide what you'll want to eat. Remember to consider the food storage you'll have, likely either a minifridge or cooler, and choose dishes that will be easy to make over a fire, like chili, roasted veggie skewers, or loaded baked potatoes.

There's no need to plan exactly what you'll eat each day, but having everything waiting for you in the van will ensure you don't go to bed hungry, and stocking a few staple breakfast ingredients will allow you to wake up focused on the adventures of the day.

Head to the grocery store at the start of your trip with your meal plan and ingredient list in hand. There may be shops along your journey, but if you're exploring national parks or secluded beaches, you'll want to be sure you aren't missing any crucial ingredients before you begin your trip. Tacos just aren't the same without the tortillas.

Stock Extra Snacks

Being in a campervan allows you to **venture** to more remote destinations, and that means there likely won't be many pit stops available. Take advantage when you can, because your body won't care about the lack of nearby stores after you complete an epic trek through the forest. Before leaving civilization, buy some extra fuel, like sandwich fixings and trail mix, to take with you on your hiking, biking, or paddling excursions. And don't forget treats for the inevitable late-night campfire sessions.

5. _____

You have limited space, and some of it is going to be taken up by you. Do you really need three swimsuits and four sweatshirts? No. You don't. Consider what's really going to make

your trip enjoyable, then **ditch** everything else. You don't want to be sifting through things you wish you'd left at home when you're trying to get dressed in the morning.

Pick the Right Campsite

Though you have more flexibility with a van than you do with a tent, it's still important to be thoughtful when choosing your campsite. First, only camp where you're permitted to sleep overnight. This is primarily dependent upon local ordinances and park rules, so study up before you get on the road.

Once you're out and looking for your site, keep a few things in mind. You'll want to find a level spot. It will save you from waking up smashed into one side of the van or having your blankets slide off the bed. Also try to stay away from any campground lights, which may keep you up at night and will certainly hinder your stargazing. If you can, try to pick a location that showcases the best the campground has to offer. If it's at the beach, get that ocean view. If you're in the mountains, look for the vista.

Campgrounds tend to have multiple lots of different shapes and sizes, so don't be afraid to drive around a bit to find one that suits your van. Some national park websites even offer photographs and reviews of each site, so you can make an educated choice when booking in advance.

Stay Organized

Mess leads to stress. Find a place for everything at the start of your trip and put it all away when you're done. Remember to account for the driving you'll be doing, so place anything fragile in a secure spot.

Keep a Flashlight Nearby

Being in a van doesn't change the fact that you're still camping. Keep a **flashlight** close by for nighttime bathroom trips or detecting unwelcome wildlife.

6. _____

This is not a metaphorical suggestion. You should actually plan where you'll put your shoes when you're in the van. You've probably been climbing a rocky cliff or walking through a sand **dune**, so they're covered in dirt. You don't want that in your bed. And do yourself a favor—keep them far away from your head.

You also might need them in the middle of the night or early hours, so stick to the place you've chosen. Your van will stay clean, and you'll be happy you know exactly where they are in the morning.

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EXERCISES:

I. What advice would you give to someone who would like to go camping? Make a list of the most useful tips. Compare your ideas with your partner's/partners'.

II. Read the text and match the headings A-F with the gaps 1-6:

- A. Do Some Meal Planning
- B. Find a Spot for Your Shoes
- C. But Still Do Some Planning
- D. Be Sure You Can Drive It
- E. Don't Overpack
- F. Check the Gear Before You Go

III. Explain the meaning of the highlighted words.

IV. Compare your ideas from exercise 1 with the ideas from the text. What are the similarities and differences? Would you add anything to the list?

V. Have you ever been on a camping holiday? Did you enjoy it? Why (not)? Would you like to go camping (again)? Why (not)?

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