

TIPS FOR CAMPING WITH DOGS

June is National Camping Month. It's a terrific time to try camping with your dog, or to resolve to do it more often. To make sure you and your dog have as much fun as you possibly can, it's important to follow the Scout Motto: "Be prepared."



Here are some suggestions to help create an outstanding experience:

Let your dog check out the gear. Set up your tent in the backyard while your dog watches, and give him treats or other rewards inside it. Wear a headlamp or use a flashlight on a night walk. (This is something I wish we'd done before we took Rio on his first camping trip. He was initially terrified of our headlamps!)

Visit the veterinarian. It is important to ensure your dog is healthy and up to date on vaccinations when traveling. Ask about preventive medications for fleas, ticks, and heartworms, and keep a copy of your dog's vaccine records in your car's glove compartment. Be ready for emergencies. Make sure your dog's microchip information is up to date, bring a pet first aid kit, and know where the nearest AAHA-accredited animal hospital is. Also be sure to list your cell phone number on your dog's ID tag.

Add dog supplies to your camping checklist. You don't want to get to the middle of nowhere and realize you've forgotten something important, like his food or leash!

Know whether the campground is pet-friendly before you arrive. Make sure every member of your camping party is welcome with a quick online search or phone call.

Bring a stake with a lead, or "tie-out," to secure your dog when you're at the campground. This satisfies the common "Dogs must be leashed in the campground" rule, and gives you peace of mind that while you're staring up at the stars, your dog won't wander off or chase wildlife. Don't forget to bring a hammer to drive the stake into the ground securely.

Have extra towels and blankets on hand. You'll be glad for the extra towels if your dog swims—you don't want him to get your sleeping bag wet or become chilled—or if you need to wash him after he rolls in a rotting carcass (been there, done that). He should have a designated towel or blanket for the ground next to your camping chairs, and extra blankets in the tent in case it's cold at night.

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If your dog is crate trained, bring the crate. It can help him feel more secure.

Seek shade. Position your tent so that there will be shade from trees, or invest in a pop-up tent or canopy. Dogs can easily overheat otherwise.

Bring chew toys. This gives your dog something to do at the campsite while you are busy making dinner or talking around the campfire. Stay away from bones, however—in addition to being a health hazard for your dog, a hidden or buried bone can attract wildlife.

Keep water in the dog bowl and check it frequently. You might need to replace it if the wind blows twigs into it or pinecones fall in.

Scoop and bag dog poop to encourage campgrounds to remain pet-friendly. As always, respect your fellow campers.

Use a pet-friendly insect repellent to keep bugs at bay. Heartworm prevention is also key, as the disease is transmitted by mosquitos.

Remember, a tired dog is an obedient dog. Taking long hikes during the day is not only exhilarating, but it tires your pup out so that instead of fussing or barking—a no-no in campgrounds—he'll be ready for a peaceful evening.

Check your dog for ticks, foxtails, burrs, and thorns. These can become a major problem for your pet if not promptly located and removed.

Stay together. You don't want to leave your dog alone at the campground unattended—or dangerously, in a hot car or tent.

Lastly, have fun and take lots of photos!