

5 Reasons You Should Take Your Family Camping This Year

Recently I had the privilege of previewing a movie called *The Stray*, which will be in select theaters this Friday. It is a true story about filmmaker Mitch Davis and his family's adoption of a stray dog. Like many fathers, Mitch has a hard time balancing his career dreams with his family life. He finally makes the difficult decision to choose his family over his career. One of my favorite parts of the movie is when he attempts to bond with his son by taking him and his friends on a camping trip.

I loved taking my family away to hike and camp. Everything about camping can be a master class in dad proficiency. You don't have to be a Boy Scout to pull this off (though it sure wouldn't hurt), but you do have to be willing to do some legwork and planning. Either way, if you do this right, taking the kids camping with dad could make you a better father, and here's why:

1. Planning together

Work together in this task. Location, gear, menu, games and activities. Ask questions such as, "How do you think we should handle mosquitoes?" "What's the best way to cook sausages?" Or, "It's likely to get cold, how should we plan for that?" Ownership of the plan is step one to an awesome trip.

2. Shared responsibility

Responsibilities you can pass off include organizing the snacks, building the fire, making sure the flashlights are in working order, finding and sharpening sticks for the marshmallows and taking care of the trash. A lot depends on age and ability, but expecting help, relying on your child for a contribution and sharing real responsibility is a milestone

for both parent and child.

3. No electronic media

This means you too, dad. Hike, swim, gather firewood, organize a scavenger hunt, dust off the old ukulele, teach your kids to play the harmonica, play Go Fish by firelight, read an adventure book aloud and bring a map of the constellations to learn about the stars.

4. The great outdoors

Camping puts families in touch with something primal, something that is often completely masked by our indoor modern lives. Being under the stars together, drinking in the natural world, connects us with what is essential as human beings and naturally opens our spirits to conversations about the deeper meaning of life.

5. Epic stories

Come equipped with great starter questions, such as “When you look into the night sky, what’s the first thing you think of?” “How do you think all this was created?” “What’s your best memory of your grandpa?” “Tell a story about a time you were really scared.” Or, “Tell us about someone you’ve always wanted to meet.”

What was your favorite camping memory from childhood? {eoa}

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