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November/December 2023

COOLtears™

and tiny campers
MAGAZINE

4th Annual Gift Guide

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- Regional Camping Spotlight: Embracing Winters Mild Side
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COOL Tears™ and tiny campers MAGAZINE

Vol. 11 No. 6 November/December 2023



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Letter from the Editor:



Hello Tiny Camper Enthusiasts!

As the year draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on the incredible journey we've shared at Cool Tears. It's been a year of growth, community, and exploration, and I'm thrilled to recount some of our most memorable moments with you.

First and foremost, let's talk about a milestone that still feels like a dream: our first-ever Cool Tears sponsored camping event. Seeing so many of you there, sharing stories around the campfire, and experiencing the joy of tiny camping together was nothing short of magical. It was a vivid reminder of why we do what we do – to bring together enthusiasts who share a passion for the simplicity and beauty of tiny campers.

Speaking of growth, we hit an amazing milestone this year – reaching 14,000 subscribers! Each one of you has contributed to making Cool Tears a vibrant and engaging community. Your enthusiasm and support fuel our commitment to delivering content that resonates with your tiny camper adventures.

Building a community has always been at the heart of Cool Tears, and this year, we've seen that community grow stronger. Your stories, tips, and shared experiences have turned our magazine into a hub for tiny camper enthusiasts to connect and learn from each other.

Looking ahead to the next year, we're brimming with excitement. Expect more in-depth features, captivating stories, and perhaps a few surprises that will enhance your tiny camper experience. We're committed to not just maintaining the quality you expect from us but elevating it.

Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey. Here's to more adventures, more connections, and more unforgettable memories in the year ahead.

Enjoy the read, and as always, camp responsibly. ■

Happy travels and stay safe
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Lisa Adams
Editor
Cool Tears Magazine™
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KITCHEN ON WHEELS

GLUTEN FREE BROWNIES



There are a million brownie recipes out there, right? I think the humble brownie is a great example of how subtle differences in taste and texture can make or break a brownie. To tell the truth, I've always been partial to the Ghirardelli tried-and-true box mix but then I made these. If you like dense, rich, intense chocolate goodness this recipe will impress.

I got to thinking that this recipe is so simple and yummy, using mostly shelf stable ingredients. It seemed good enough to take on the road but the verdict was out until recently when I tried it with the Omnia Oven. Turns out, it's a keeper. It worked beautifully with my Omnia oven on the campstove.

Hints:

- Melt the oil and immediately turn the stove off, removing the pan from the burner. You don't want to cook the eggs as you add them.
- Heat the bottom part of the Omnia and place the silicon insert in once heated, this will help expedite the cooking process.
- Use a small baking dish when using a conventional oven or double the recipe.

Ingredients

- ¼ cup coconut oil (or butter)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 4 large eggs
- pinch of salt
- Small baking dish or Omnia Stovetop Oven with silicone insert

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350° F, if using a conventional oven.

Melt the coconut oil in a saucepan over low heat. Use a whisk and stir in the sugar, cocoa powder, and the vanilla until well combined. Whisk in the eggs, one at a time, until well combined. Be sure to allow the mix to cool before adding the eggs if it's very hot. Otherwise, the eggs could scramble. Pour the mixture into the baking dish and bake for 25 - 30 minutes in a conventional oven. The brownies are done when a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, or if the brownies feel firm to the touch. Remove from the oven and allow to cool before slicing into portions.

These brownies can be made at the campsite in the Omnia Stovetop Oven. For ease of cleanup, use a silicone insert. Preheat the Omnia Oven on the campstove, and then place the brownie mixture filled silicone insert once it's heated.

Cooking times in the Omnia will vary based on the campstove, outside temperatures, wind conditions, etc. Our brownies baked perfectly in the 30 - 35 minute range. If using the silicone insert, remove the brownies before cutting, by flipping them over onto a plate. ■









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4th Annual Gift Guide



By **COOL TEARS STAFF**

Welcome to our 4th annual gift guide, where the spirit of the season meets the practicality of the road. This year, we're not just sharing any items; we're bringing you a collection of personal favorites - gear that we've tested and trusted on our own teardrop camping adventures. As we guide you through these top picks, please note that for some of these items, we're proud affiliates, which means we may earn a commission if you purchase through our links. This partnership comes at no cost to you but does support our magazine in bringing you comprehensive guides like this one. We purchased each of these items on our own and no company has requested that their items be included in our list.

Small Butane Torch:

A small butane torch is an excellent gift for outdoor enthusiasts and teardrop campers who appreciate the ability to start a fire quickly, regardless of the conditions. Lighting a fire with a match or long lighter can be very tricky if there is any amount of wind. It's perfect for igniting campfires or stoves, and its compact size doesn't compromise on power. Its ease of use and reliability even in windy conditions make it a must-have in any camper's toolkit. But it's not just limited to starting fires.

We've used this torch to fuse the end of some paracord for a clothesline, browning marshmallows when there is no time for a fire, and we've used it in the house for browning the top of some desserts. Be



sure to select a butane torch that has a safety lock on it, so it can't ignite while packed or while bouncing around in your galley. Also note, the torch is shipped empty, so you will need to purchase a bottle of butane from Walmart, Target, or sporting goods store. [We use a different brand torch that we purchased locally, but this one is highly rated and has over 43k reviews.](#)

Elevated Fire Pit:

[An elevated fire pit, like this one from Fireside Outdoor](#), is a thoughtful gift for those who love to gather around a warm blaze under

the stars. It's designed to leave no trace, preserving the natural beauty that teardrop campers are drawn to. Portable and safe, it allows for a campfire experience without the environmental impact, making it ideal for eco-conscious adventurers.



Fire Blanket:

Safety is paramount in the great outdoors, and a fire blanket is a gift that conveys care and preparedness. [The Campfire Defender, from Fireside Outdoor, was the first product we purchased from the company.](#) It's a simple, effective tool for extinguishing campfires, providing peace of mind for campers. The kit weighs about sixteen pounds (the blanket is about half of that) and is easy to store in the included shoulder bag; it's a sensible addition to any teardrop camper's gear. We used this each night while on a recent trip to the Adirondack Mountains of New York. If used properly, it turns your campfire to a "low" setting, per the company's website.

So it's possible to still have a hot, dry bed of coals up to 8 hours later that can be restarted. We haven't perfected the ventilation system though, so each morning our fire was completely out. I love that the Campfire Defender is easy to see at night with the reflective banding around each side. For added security, when the wind picks up, it's easy to get your fire under control with this blanket. There are grommets on each side and corner of the blanket and the included glow in the dark stakes secure it in place. Considering most wildfires are caused by humans, as covered in the last issue, this product makes it a snap to cover the

fire when we camp, but the thought of using



fire if sudden rain or winds pick up. Once the weather calms down, remove the blanket and pick up where you left off.

Firewood Splitter:

As mentioned above, safety is key outdoors. In fact, this product was designed by a child who was determined to avoid injuries from splitting wood into kindling! We love having a

an ax to make kindling makes me cringe. I have no desire to have my hand anywhere near a swinging ax! We've had this handy tool since the winter of 2016 and it's still going strong! [This cast iron kindling firewood splitter is safe and easy to use.](#) Just place it on a sturdy surface (the ground works fine) and load a piece of wood through the top. A few whacks with a hammer or a small sledge and the wood splits. It's easy to make small kindling that will help build any fire with this tool. [This video shows how easy it is to use.](#)

Collapsible Sink:

[Space is at a premium in tiny campers, making a collapsible sink a clever gift.](#) It's perfect for washing dishes or clothes. Durable and easy to clean, it folds away neatly, embodying the minimalist spirit of teardrop camping. Our teardrop has a sink, but this is still used in some manner on every trip. First, we store it in the galley in the folded position. We place other items inside for storage while we're

traveling. It prevents items from bouncing around in the galley. Second, it's a great wash basin to clean vegetables. The integrated plug and strainer is easy to use and it's nice to separate the food bits from the gray water. This portable sink is also nice to use after we've winterized our onboard water system. We don't have young children, but many of the online reviews rave about how they use it to wash baby bottles in their home so they avoid cross contamination in their home sink. The handles are sturdy and work well when you want to move dirty dishes from one location.

First Aid Kit:

A comprehensive first aid kit is a must-have and a considerate gift for anyone venturing into the outdoors. It ensures that campers are prepared for minor injuries or emergencies, making it an essential component of any camping checklist. [The MyFAK from My Medic is a great choice and it comes in three sizes and they come in standard or pro levels.](#) The pro level includes more advanced equipment, such as a tourniquet, Z strips to help close cuts, and chest wound seals. All of the kits include a first aid booklet for reference. Each of the sizes have a MOLLE panel on the outside for added customization. If the MyFAK is larger than you'd like, they recently released the Sidekick, which still contains over 70 first aid items. Like the larger kits, it comes in standard or pro



levels. My Medic is running their Black Friday sale now through Nov 22 so their first aid kits are 20% off now. These first aid kits are HSA/FSA approved. Stay safe and be prepared.

Trail Keg:

[The Trail Keg is a fantastic gift for those who appreciate a cold beverage after a day of adventure.](#) It keeps drinks carbonated and chilled for hours using an insulated stainless steel growler, making it a hit at any campsite gathering. Durable and portable, it's a luxury that outdoor enthusiasts wouldn't buy for themselves but would love to receive. I purchased a Trail Key about 6 years ago and it's still in use. [If you enjoy a carbonated beverage, whether it's beer, nitro coffee, seltzer water, draft cocktail, or kombucha, the Trail Keg is a great addition to your galley.](#) We have used our Trail Keg as a growler at some of our favorite local breweries and it's great knowing that we can keep it carbonated for weeks so it won't go flat before we can drink it. It's great to be able to share a fresh beverage at the campsite. The Trail Keg comes with a stainless steel chrome tap and a dual stage CO2 regulator to keep the pressure consistent, both can be removed during transport. I initially bought the Trail Keg because my dad was teaching me how to make beer. I was trying small batches at a time (1 gallon) to try to fine tune a few recipes. You can use the Trail Keg to bottle condition in one larger batch instead of

individual bottles or you can force carbonate your beer in just a few days, which was my preferred method. Do you prefer sparkling water to beer? Make your own using the Trail Keg, using the force carbonation method, and you won't have empty cans to deal with while



camping!

If you already have a large insulated, stainless steel bottle, check the website to see if it's compatible with their tap and regulator system.

Pie Iron:

A pie iron is a fun and versatile cooking tool, perfect for toasting up anything from sandwiches to sweet treats over an open fire. It's a gift that adds a touch of gourmet to campfire cooking, encouraging creativity

and enjoyment of comfort food in the great outdoors. [This rectangular pie iron is large enough to make two sandwiches at once, or it will fit hotdogs lengthwise inside too.](#) Its non-stick surface is easy to clean and the handle length is adjustable. It is nice that the two cast iron pieces fully detach from each other, which makes cleaning a breeze. It also allows you to use just one side to make a meal as well, in a small cast iron skillet over the fire. We don't use the pie irons often, but they are great for making reuben sandwiches.

Magnetic Hide a Key Case:

[For the practical-minded camper, a magnetic hide a key case is a thoughtful gift.](#) It offers a secure and accessible way to store spare keys, ensuring they're never locked out of their vehicle or camper, adding a layer of convenience and security to their travels. It's easy to stick one of these to any non-aluminum trailer to hide either a set of teardrop doors or galley keys, or a tow vehicle key. This would make a great stocking stuffer and it's a huge relief knowing that we won't have to call a locksmith while we're traveling...been there, done that!

Bear Spray:

[For those camping in bear country, bear spray is a serious gift that provides protection and confidence.](#) It's an effective deterrent in the rare event of a bear encounter, making it a valuable addition to any outdoor adventurer's gear.

Microfiber Towel:

A microfiber towel is a versatile, space-saving gift that's perfect for campers. In my younger

years, I was a high school swim coach. A lot of the kids had quick drying, small, microfiber towels, or shammies that they would use when getting out of the pool. We used to use the same towels camping that we do in the house. Granted, they are nice and plush, but they take up a lot of room and they can take a long time to dry. This type of small towel is perfect while using in a tiny camper because it takes up very little space in your shower kit. [Quick-drying and super-absorbent, it's ideal for everything from drying off after a swim, or shower, or to cleaning up spills, making it a practical accessory for any outdoor activity. These come in several sizes and colors and they are reasonably priced.](#) Each person has their own color and we use the larger sizes for drying off our bodies, and the smaller sizes make great towels to keep in the galley to clean up any spills.

Mr Mocks Skeeter Beater:

[The Skeeter Beater by Mr. Mocks](#) is an ideal gift for outdoor enthusiasts who love to lounge in comfort without the annoyance of bugs. This bug net is designed to fit nearly any hammock, offering a sanctuary from mosquitoes and other insects. Its lightweight and easy-to-use design make it a hassle-free addition to any camping trip. Whether reading a book, taking a nap, or enjoying the night sky, the Skeeter Beater ensures that your relaxation time is undisturbed by pesky

intruders. It's a thoughtful gift that enhances the outdoor experience, making it perfect for those who cherish their time in nature and want to enjoy it in peace. This has proven to be a great addition to our hammock and it protects us perfectly from those pesky mosquitoes and biting black flies.

Collapsible Travel Kettle:



[A collapsible travel kettle is a thoughtful gift for tea or coffee-loving campers. It's even a great way to quickly make hot water for doing dishes or washing up!](#) It's a space-saver that allows them to boil water quickly and safely, ensuring they can enjoy a hot drink even when space and weight are at a premium. We picked this kettle for a few reasons. First, it's collapsible, so it folds up nicely to transport in the galley of our teardrop. Secondly, because of the smaller size of the heating element, we can boil a pot of water using our Jackery 1000 while we're boondocking. Each pot takes our

Jackery down about 8-10%, which is no issue since we can "fill it back up" via solar. It is so nice to not have to use our propane stove



kettle is that we can still make a cup of coffee in the morning at a Harvest Host location because we don't need to use our propane stove to heat up water!

NOAA Emergency Weather Alert Radio:

[A NOAA emergency weather alert radio is a gift that could be a lifesaver. It provides critical updates on severe weather, which is essential for those spending time outdoors, ensuring they can stay informed and safe in unpredictable conditions.](#)

Our 4th annual gift guide comes to a close with the hope that you've discovered the perfect items to enhance your loved one's camping experiences. These are not just products to us; they're part of the fabric of our outdoor lifestyle, tested and trusted through numerous adventures. By choosing from this guide, you're gifting more than just an item; you're offering a stamp of approval from seasoned campers. We're grateful to have you as part of our community and as a reminder, some of the links in this guide are affiliate links, which means we may earn a commission at no additional cost to you. This helps us continue to test, trust, and share the gear we love. Here's to finding that special gift that promises safety, enjoyment, and the thrill of the great outdoors. Happy holidays, and may every gift you give bring joy and adventure to those who receive them. ■

to get hot water for coffee in the morning. We are Harvest Host members and we love camping in unique locations; but they have a rule against cooking outside. So basically all clamshell campers or squaredrops are affected. The added bonus of this little travel



**Merchandise available
from Bonfire**

NOTE: One of the great things about having a digital magazine is the ability to link you directly to the products or services that you want to hear more about. Some of the links on our website or in the magazine are affiliate links where we earn a small commission on goods that you purchase. These commissions help us to continue to defray the costs of publishing this magazine. You may notice as you read through the magazine that if you put your mouse over any ad or hyperlink, the screen may flash briefly. You can click on that picture or hyperlink and it will take you directly to more information. We are not affiliates for everything that we link to.

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We appreciate your support. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact either of us at Lisa@cooltears.com or Anne@cooltears.com

Harvest Hosts is a membership program that provides access to a network of wineries, farms, breweries, museums and other unique attractions that invite RVers to visit and stay overnight. Harvest Hosts now allows clamshell and teardrop trailers, but you may NOT use your outdoor cooking facility. Click the logo below to get 15% off the regular yearly price. We've stayed at breweries, wineries, farms, and art studios in our local area as well as across the country.





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COLOR OPTIONS



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December 2023 - January 2024 Teardrop, Squaredrop, and DIY Camper Gatherings



By **COOL TEARS STAFF**

As a dedicated team at Cool Tears, we strive to keep you informed about upcoming events and gatherings. However, we recognize that we can't be everywhere at once. That's where you come in! We rely on the contributions of our community to help us discover new stories, uncover exciting events, and submit articles that will captivate and inspire the broader teardrop camping community.

Joining forces with others who share your passion for teardrop and squaredrop campers can open doors to a whole new world. These gatherings are more than just social events; they're a treasure trove of shared knowledge and camaraderie, where you can swap stories, tips, and revel in the unique pleasure of tiny camper camping. It's the perfect spot to glean insights from fellow enthusiasts and discover new ways to enhance your compact camping experience.

Whether you're a veteran of the open road or just embarking on your tiny camper adventure, consider marking your calendar for these upcoming events. We were so thrilled to get an email from a subscriber who commented that he attended a recent event after reading about it in our last issue!

Mingling with kindred spirits can enrich your camping escapades, spark your adventurous spirit, and forge unforgettable memories. Let's come together to honor the spirit of teardrop and squaredrop camping and strengthen a community united by a love for the wilderness.

Take a look at the upcoming tiny camper meet-ups, and should you join one, we're here to help you narrate your story to our readers!

December 1 - 3

Lone Star Chapter's Lake Livingston Gathering, Lake Livingston State Park, Livingston, TX

December 7 - 10

Florida Chapter "Going for It" Gathering
Silver Springs State Park, Ocala, FL

January 18 - 21

Carolina's Chapter, 2024 "Shiverree"
Kings Mountain State Park, Blacksburg, SC

Did you know that Cool Tears has a teardrop for rent? There are still dates available for the fall season. [Click here to go directly to our rental link.](#)

Note: We are located in southwest Michigan.



RENT ME





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

nuCamp Celebrates Resilience at the 2023 Dealer Summit

Sugarcreek, Ohio. October 30, 2023 – nuCamp, a leading manufacturer of high-quality teardrop trailers and truck campers, is thrilled to announce the successful conclusion of its 2023 Dealer Summit, held in the picturesque city of Charleston from October 16th to 18th. This event served as a testament to resilience, partnership, and an unwavering dedication to excellence.

The 2023 Dealer Summit provided an exceptional platform for networking, learning, and growth. Distinguished dealers from across North America flocked to South Carolina and forged a landscape which allowed participants to share insights, forge valuable connections, and explore new horizons.

The event was hosted at the Lotrel Hotel, a charming establishment nestled in the heart of downtown Charleston. The boutique hotel offered opulent amenities and unparalleled hospitality, augmenting the Dealer Summit experience with its distinctive southern charm.

The event kicked off on the rooftop with a lively welcome cocktail and appetizer gathering on Monday evening. The mornings of Tuesday and Wednesday were dedicated to engaging and informative sessions led by nuCamp team members. The highlighted discussions included marketing initiatives, the expansion of nuCamp's 5-star customer experience, and product development. Sessions were followed by roundtable discussions that facilitated meaningful conversations that helped to script future endeavors.

In the afternoons, attendees indulged in excursions that seamlessly blended teambuilding activities with exploring Charleston's historic and captivating surroundings.

Delightful rooftop lunches were held in the afternoons, with nuCamp having the honor to announce and present the top dealer awards for 2023. With Charleston also being known for

its cuisine, dinners ranged from a charming porch dinner featuring live music, accompanied by a traditional low country boil all the to the summit's pinnacle – an elegant, and memorable, dinner at the Establishment, where dealers were treated to an exquisite meal.

Scott Hubble, CEO of nuCamp, expressed his gratitude, saying, "Our core partners, who form the bedrock of our success, were in attendance at this event. This year hasn't been easy on any of us, but together we are stronger. I believe we have the best dealer body in the industry. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to them for their enduring partnership with nuCamp. Together, we'll continue to uphold the highest standards in our industry."

About nuCamp

nuCamp manufactures the highest quality teardrop trailers, teardrop campers, and truck campers available on the American market. Our recreational vehicle and trailer products are the results of extensive research and development, customer feedback, and the fusion of technology and old-world craftsmanship. The dedicated craftsmen and women who work at the nuCamp facility in Sugarcreek, Ohio, are committed to the principles of simplistic design, high-quality fabrication, and fanatical customer support. nuCamp is the world's largest manufacturer of teardrop trailers.

The Skeeter Beater

- LIGHT WEIGHT 140Z
- SUPER SOFT & DURABLE DOUBLE ZIPPER
- WATERPROOF STUFF SACK WITH STRAP
- EASY SET UP CLIPS RIGHT ON CARABINERS
- NO SAG WITH HIDDEN ADJUSTABLE RIDGELINE
- FITS ANY SINGLE OR DOUBLE HAMMOCK
- GO SUCK ON SOMEONE ELSE'S BLOOD
- Mr. Mocks



Rolling Homes, Epic Backdrops: Celebrating the Winners of the 2024 Cool Tears and Tiny Campers Photo Contest

By **COOL TEARS STAFF**

As the sun climbs above the horizon, casting a golden glow over the low, sandy dunes of Maryland, a tiny trailer sits surrounded by wild horses. This is just a glimpse of the stunning imagery we've been honored to receive in this year's Cool Tears Photo Contest. From DIY teardrops and squaredrops to manufactured trailers in the mountains of the US and Canada and to the unique environments of Australia, your submissions have taken us on a journey through some of the most breathtaking landscapes our planet has to offer.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to every participant who shared a piece of their adventure with us. Your snapshots have not only showcased the charm and versatility of tiny trailers but have also reminded us of the boundless beauty that lies in the great outdoors. Your enthusiasm and

passion for tiny campers have genuinely turned this contest into a global celebration.

A special congratulations to our winners! Your images stood out for their composition, the unique beauty of the locations, and the way they captured the spirit of tiny trailer travel. From Canada to the vibrant landscapes of South America, the coast of Europe, to the untamed wilderness of the US, each photo tells a story of exploration and the joy of the open road.

We're thrilled to announce that the winning shots are now immortalized in our exclusive 2024 Cool Tears and Tiny Campers Calendar, available for purchase by clicking this link. Each month features a different winning photo, allowing you to embark on a visual odyssey from the comfort of your home. As you flip through the pages, let each image inspire your next journey and the adventures that await.

The calendars are more than just pictures; they're a mosaic of the tiny trailer community's spirit, a testament to the wanderlust that drives us all. By purchasing a calendar, you're not only supporting the artistry and adventure of your fellow travelers but also fueling future contests and stories that we all love to share.

Get your hands on this limited edition calendar and mark the days to your next epic location. Who knows? The next featured photo could be yours.

Happy travels and happy snapping!

Congrats to our winners: Jerry Clark, Aleksander and Marina Kitsen, Anthony McAvoy (AUS), Guido and Andrea Scheidler (Europe), Shirley Reynolds, Mikola Lee (AUS), John Chico, Jim and Barbara Steffens, Sam Van Fleet, Ricardo Ospina (Columbia, South America), Kat McConnell, Pamela Becker (Canada), Jim and Selma Bennett, and Tony Latham. ■



Rolling Rendezvous: Jay Poore's DIYTCC Meetup

By **MELODY MILLER**

Each year, the FB group created by Jay Poore, from Michigan, has a nine night group gathering at the beginning of June. It initially started near his home. After the 2nd year in Michigan, the admins decided to make the annual event one that would move locations each year.

In 2020, once most restrictions in travel were lifted, it was held in Tennessee. 2021 was in Arkansas. 2022 in Kentucky. This year the group was at Bennett Springs State Park in Lebanon, Missouri. It was held June 9-18, 2023.

This year the location was decided on by a vote in the group. There was also a t-shirt design contest. The group voted on Jay Poore's anonymous submission. They were printed by Jam'n Tees in North Carolina.

Jay was scheduled to attend, but had emergency health issues and had to cancel. Ben Meyer, an admin of the group, got a life size image of Jay printed up, so that all in attendance could sign it and send him well wishes. He's the one in photos with a red shirt



on.

The purpose of a nine night gathering is to incorporate 2 weekends so that people can come and go as schedules allow. This year we had a total of 35 home built trailers, in

several stages of completion. One came in with the galley duct taped down even. With other knowledgeable builders in attendance, they were able to get ideas as their build continued.

Each evening a member's site was chosen, with their permission, to host an evening campfire. This gives everyone a chance to visit. Many times questions turned into members helping each other solve problems. John Miller, amongst others, always has his tools to be able to lend any hands of assistance that they can. We did do a few crafts during this time as well.

Gift bags are handed out to all who attend. They are comprised of items made and donated by members in attendance. Members also contribute items for door prizes. This year camper themed hand towels were mailed by a group member to me, Melody, so that we could use them for door prizes. There was even a painting donated that was done during the gathering.

One interesting thing to note, this year, is that many people now have ebikes. One member, upon braking and stopping, fell over while getting off his bike. Members rushed to his aid and he was brought to ER. He broke his arm. While in the hospital, he was scheduled to move sites that day. Three members packed up his things, hooked up his trailer, and moved it to his new site. The next day his sons made the trip to pick him up, and he headed back home to Nebraska.

Also, that day two ladies and myself had ebike incidents. Mechelle White saved herself when

her brakes wouldn't work in a downhill curve. (You can see that footage on YouTube, https://youtu.be/X2JLQIYn8ME?si=JUAqJs_8S-M6tBFQ as well as more information on the week.) The other woman and myself ended up with scrapes and bruises after we both lost it while getting off our bikes, as well.

One of the great aspects of DIY gatherings is that every single camper is different. All are built exactly to each builder's needs and desires. However, each is an inspiration and can give others ideas for continued improvements, additions, or future builds. Ryu Fukami <https://youtu.be/7F6oWAQ80z4?si=Ybdpc9u92fgwnvrd>, has inspired many with his innovative space saving ideas.

If you get the chance to even visit one of these gatherings, please do. All are welcome. Come for the day, camp in a tent, 5th wheel, anything. We are doing big things in small spaces. Get inspired, sometimes by these literal works of art. ■





All photos shared by Melody Miller



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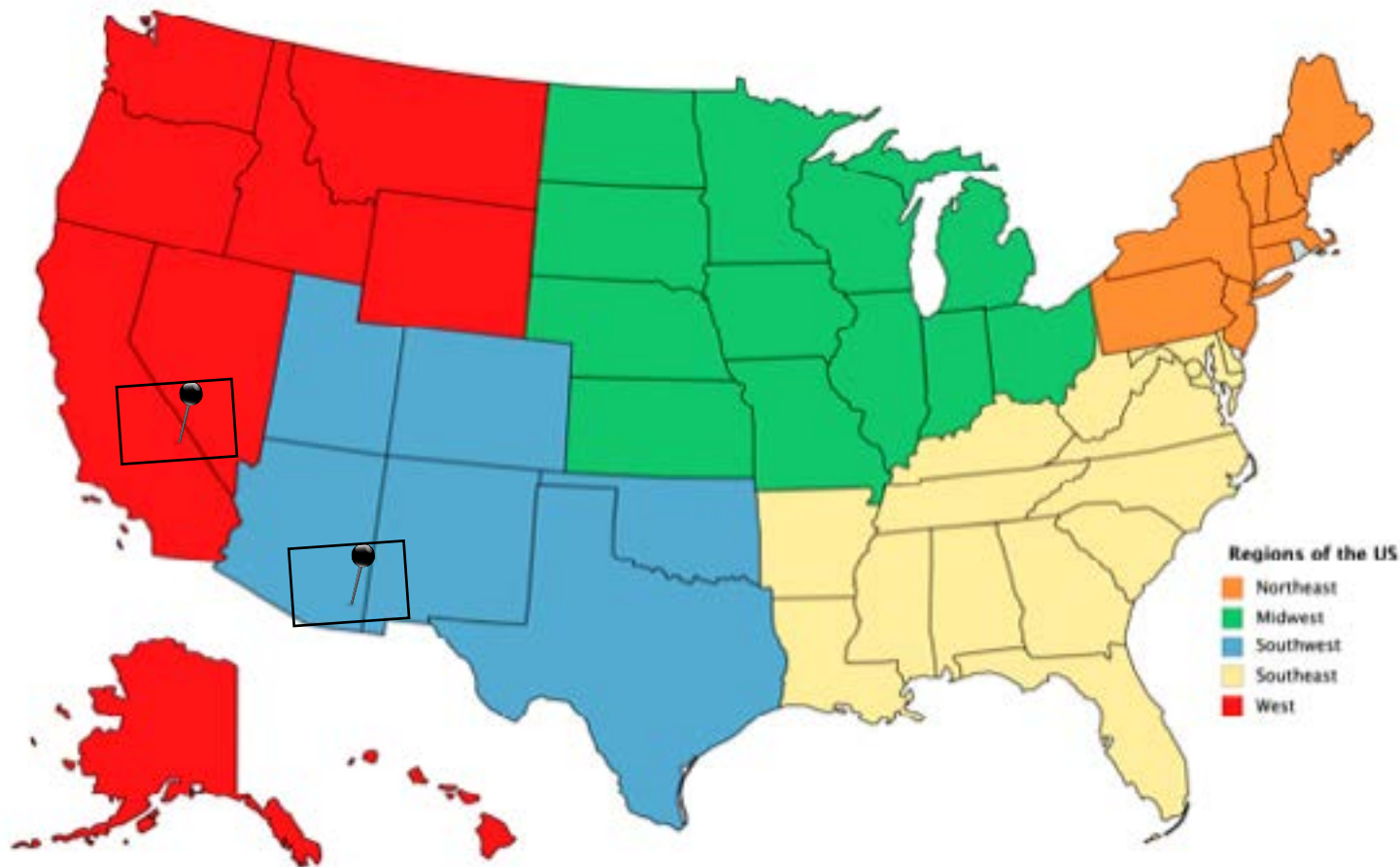
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Regional Camping Spotlight: Embracing Winter's Mild Side

By **COOL TEARS STAFF**

As winter sets in for the northern hemisphere, we're highlighting two locations that offer a respite from the typical winter chill and are great for campers looking to enjoy the outdoors without the deep freeze.

Escape the winter's chill and head to Death Valley National Park, straddling California and Nevada. Renowned for its extreme summer heat, winter transforms this landscape into an inviting haven with comfortable 60-degree days, although the nights can be chilly. It's a season when the park's vastness whispers secrets through its shifting sands and towering peaks, offering serene hikes and starlit

nights. Campers can explore the mosaic of salt flats, badlands, and canyons, enjoying the outdoors in a milder winter climate.

Journey southeast to Arizona's Chiricahua National Monument, a geological marvel dubbed the "wonderland of rocks." Winter here is a gentle affair, with the monument's iconic rhyolite formations serving as sentinels to a history etched in stone. Trails weave through the towering spires, offering campers a unique blend of adventure and tranquility. With Arizona's clear skies and temperate days, Chiricahua is a winter camping gem that combines natural majesty with an almost spring-like embrace.

Both destinations defy the conventional winter experience, providing a variety of activities that can be enjoyed in the cooler but not freezing weather.

Death Valley National Park

Airport Road, Furnace Creek, CA
35.84320, -116.20103
35°50'35.52"N, 116°12'3.708"W

Death Valley National Park, straddling the California-Nevada border, is a land of extremes. It is the hottest, driest, and lowest national park in the United States. The park's diverse landscape was shaped by volcanic activity followed by erosion and deposition, creating its valleys, canyons, and mountains. Death Valley's history is rich with the boom and bust of the mining era, with ghost towns like the Wildrose Charcoal Kilns and the Harmony Borax Works serving as reminders of the past. The ten beehive shaped huts of the charcoal kilns are believed to be the best known example of these kilns in the western United States.

There are over three million acres of designated Wilderness and hundreds of miles of back country roads to explore. In fact, Death Valley has more miles of roads than any other national park. Some of the most popular areas of the park to visit, such as Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes and Badwater Basin are designated wilderness areas but they are accessible by paved road! Because of the millions of acres of wilderness, this is one of the darkest night skies in the country.

Be sure to visit the lowest point in North America at Badwater Basin. This salt flat area covers nearly 200 square miles (518 square kilometers) and is mostly covered by sodium chloride (table salt), along with gypsum, borax, and calcite.

Travelers should be aware that many roads in the park are closed due to the historic flood damage from August 2023, and Badwater Road beyond mile 17 is closed to all traffic. It's crucial



to check current conditions and road closures before visiting.

There are many camping options available in the area. There are currently four national park campgrounds open for the winter in Death Valley, some with electric, some without. There are several primitive campgrounds in the park, but we are not covering them. Also, there are three private campgrounds within the park. Each of these private campgrounds have electric sites and showers.

This short article can't highlight everything to do in Death Valley, but it provides a starting point for planning that great winter escape.

Camping

Number of Sites: 4 campgrounds with over 600 sites

Pets: yes

Water: yes

Electric: yes, but only 18 sites at Furnace Creek

Price per night: \$\$ (\$22/night, no electric site - \$36 for electric)

Fire Rings: yes, at some sites

Picnic Tables: yes, at some sites

Restrooms/Showers: All 4 campgrounds have flush toilets, but no showers
Campground has ADA accessible sites

Primary activities within the park: Hiking, biking, backcountry driving, star gazing, and night photography.

Pro Tip: Are you a Star Wars fan? If so, then don't miss the self-guided Star Wars driving tour where you can see where scenes from Episode IV - A New Hope and Episode VI - Return of the Jedi were filmed.

Chiricahua National Monument

12856 E Rhyolite Creek Road

Willcox, AZ

32.010960, -109.905067

32°0'39.456"N, 109°54'18.2412"W

Chiricahua National Monument, located in southeastern Arizona, is a true winter wonderland for outdoor enthusiasts. Known as the "Wonderland of Rocks," this 12,025-acre park is a maze of rock spires formed from the eruption of an ancient volcano. These towering formations are the result of millions of years of erosion of compacted volcanic ash, creating a stunning and unique landscape that is perfect for exploration.

The monument's history is as rich as its geology. It was the homeland of the Chiricahua Apache, and later became a crossroads for pioneers. The Faraway Ranch Historic District within the park tells the story of the people who have called this area home. Although the ranch house is currently under renovation, visitors can still explore the grounds.

For those looking to embrace the great outdoors, Chiricahua offers a range of day hiking options, from easy strolls to strenuous treks along its 17 miles of day-use trails. The 8-mile paved scenic drive provides access to the heart of the monument's rock formations. Birding is also a popular activity here, as Southeast Arizona is a premier birding area in the country. Nearly 200 species of birds have been documented in the Monument.

This park has incredible animal diversity, with at least 71 species of mammals, 46 species

of reptiles, 8 amphibians, and uncounted numbers of insects present within the boundaries. Several Mexican species live within the part as well, which is the northern edge of their range. The white-nosed coati, Chiricahua fox squirrel and trogon (a green, blue, and white bird) can be found here, but they are rarely seen elsewhere in the state or country.

Travelers should note that while the monument is accessible in winter, conditions can vary, so it's wise to check the weather and road status. Campground reservations can be made online, ensuring you have a spot upon arrival.

Camping

Number of Sites: 26

Pets: yes

Water: yes

Electric: no

Price per night: \$\$ (\$20/night)

Fire Rings: yes

Picnic Tables: yes

Restrooms/showers: flush toilets, no showers
Campground has one ADA accessible site



Other nearby attractions: The historic town of Tombstone, known for the famous O.K. Corral gunfight, and the artsy town of Bisbee. Both offer a glimpse into Arizona's wild west past and are within a reasonable driving distance.

Primary activities within the park: Hiking, sightseeing, bird watching

Pro Tip: If you hike a combined 5 miles within the park, you can earn a commemorative "I Hike for Health" pin from a park ranger—a small memento of your adventure in this natural wonderland.

Pro Tip 2: The park has a Junior Ranger program, so pick up your discovery daypack at the visitor center.

■





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Leave No Trace - Respect Wildlife: Harmonious Existence

By LISA ADAMS



The Leave No Trace principles are the bedrock of outdoor ethics, especially within the pristine wilderness. The sixth principle, "Respect Wildlife," is a critical component of these guidelines, ensuring that millions of visitors to these areas each year coexist peacefully with the native wildlife. When we venture into the outdoors, it's crucial to remember that we're visiting the homes of countless wild creatures.

The Sixth Principle of Leave No Trace - Respect Wildlife

This principle is a call to action for all people to observe wildlife from a distance, to refrain from feeding animals, and to store food securely. It is a commitment to preserve the wildness of wildlife and the integrity of their habitats.

In general, it's best to keep your distance from all wildlife. Chasing or approaching is a no-go. Resist the urge to feed animals, all animals. It's harmful to their health and survival instincts. Manage your pets responsibly, or consider leaving them at home. And lastly, steer clear of wildlife during vulnerable times, like mating, nesting, raising offspring, or during the winter.

The Rise of Human-Wildlife Conflicts

It's important to remember that following the 6th Principle of Leave No Trace is important everywhere we camp, whether it's on national or state lands, or a public or private campground.

The year 2023 has seen a notable rise in human-wildlife conflicts within several national parks. Factors contributing to this increase include climate change, habitat encroachment, and the sheer number of visitors. For example, in Yellowstone National Park, there have been reports of increased gray wolf sightings as they navigate the challenges of habitat changes (<https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/nature/wolves.htm>).

Banff National Park visitation has grown



30% over the last decade, which puts added pressure on the area's wildlife habitat. Despite strong educational efforts, there are still countless people who approach wildlife, dump garbage, and leave messy campsites, which attract animals.

Recent Notable Human-Wildlife Interactions

In Canada's Banff National Park, the influx of over four million visitors annually has led to numerous encounters with wildlife. Tourists often forget that these animals are not attractions but wild creatures with their own needs and instincts. Incidents of tourists crowding around bears or elk have led to situations where animals have been conditioned to human presence or, worse,

have acted aggressively, resulting in the animal being euthanized. In September 2022, a black bear cub accessed human food and garbage in Banff's industrial compound. The cub and its mother were both relocated to a more remote area of the National Park.

Yellowstone Forever Wildlife Protection Fund, and other smaller fines.

Bison can also cut off view points within Yellowstone National Park. In cases like these, it's best to come back another time.

In Yellowstone National Park earlier this year, a bison calf became separated from its mother when the herd crossed the Lamar River. A man pushed the struggling calf up from the river and onto the road. The park rangers tried repeatedly to reunite the calf with the herd, but were unsuccessful. The calf was walking up to cars and people, creating a hazard, so the park staff had to euthanize the animal. The man was found several days later and he pleaded guilty to a federal offense of feeding, touching, teasing, frightening, or intentionally disturbing wildlife. He was charged a fine of \$500, a \$500 community service payment to



Consequences for Wildlife and Humans

The consequences of these interactions are grave. Wildlife may become habituated to human presence, leading to dangerous encounters, or they may be tragically killed if deemed a threat. For humans, these encounters can result in fines, legal action, and in rare cases, injury or death.

Call to Action

Educate yourself on the Leave No Trace principles and practice them diligently. Your actions can make a difference in preserving the natural beauty and wildlife of the areas we camp in for future generations to enjoy.

What We Can Do

- Keep our distance from all wildlife, particularly during mating and nesting seasons, and winter months, when animals are more susceptible to disturbance.
- Never feed wildlife, even birds and squirrels. It is not a kindness, but a detriment to the animal. Human food can disrupt their natural diet and dependency cycles, leading to dangerous behaviors like approaching humans or venturing onto roads.
- Never approach a wild animal, especially to take a "selfie." Yellowstone National Park recommends staying at least 25 yards away from bison, elk, and all other wildlife and 100 yards away from bears and wolves. The Canadian National Parks recommend staying 100 meters away from bison. Not sure what 100 meters looks like? Hold your fist straight out in front of you and raise your thumb. If your thumb can cover a bison that is standing sideways, then you're likely a safe distance away. If your thumb doesn't fully cover the bison, slowly retreat.
- Never leave small children unattended in areas with large animals
- If you have a pet, keep it leashed. Wild animals may see your furry friend as a predator. Not only can wild animals injure



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pets in self-defense or while protecting their young, but they can also spread diseases such as rabies.

- Store food and garbage properly. Do not allow the animal any access to your food or garbage. This will encourage the animal and make the problem worse for others. Depending on your location, how you do this may vary. Racoons can open most coolers, so it might be best to keep the cooler stored in the galley or in your tow vehicle. In bear country, consider using bear proof canisters, hanging your food, or keeping it locked in your tow vehicle with the windows up. On a recent trip to the Adirondacks in New York, one of the nearby state forest campgrounds had their dumpsters enclosed behind a tall wooden fence that was covered with electric netting to prevent animals from getting into the dumpsters. It really made us wonder why the campground we were in just a few miles away had no protection around the dumpsters!

Conclusion

The sixth principle of Leave No Trace is a guiding light for ethical wildlife observation and interaction. As visitors to our public lands, it is our responsibility to adhere to these principles, ensuring that the wildlife we come to admire continues to thrive in their natural habitats. ■



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