

Hanging Out While Camping

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Hammocks are an excellent alternative to tents for shelter when camping. They allow you to be up off the ground and are a lightweight setup that can easily be used when backpacking. Another great aspect is you can buy the hammock, tarp and bug net separately to create the perfect shelter kit for your needs. This also allows you to use just the hammock in your backyard, the tarp over a tent camping area or the option to leave your bug net behind during winter camping.



Pros:

- Keeps you off the ground which can be rocky, damp or uneven. If you have ever woken up in a puddle due to rain you know how great being off the ground would be!
- Lightweight and packs small. Most hammocks do not use any poles and are just fabric and rope/webbing.
- Accessories such as a tarp and bug net give you the same protection as a tent.
- Increased air circulation (hot weather)



Cons:

- Needs trees, posts or something to hook it up to. (frames can be purchased)
- Some parks and campgrounds don't allow anything to be attached to trees even when using tree safe straps so always a good idea to check before you go or have a back up plan.
- Can't have a bunch of people like in a large tent
- Increased air circulation (cold weather)

What you'll need:

Hammock- many are made from parachute nylon and are lightweight and breathable. They can be sized for 1 person, 2 person or 2 person plus with just some extra room. I prefer a 2 person hammock even when it's just me that way I have more room to spread out. Some include bug nets and a tarp while others are just the hammock. I prefer just the hammock itself as it allows it to be used for more than just camping such as hanging out in the backyard. There are many different sizes and styles to suit your needs.



Straps or Rope- you'll need something to hang your hammock up with. Some companies make specific hammock straps that are a great option over rope. The straps are sewn daisy chains with multiple loops that allow for quick length adjustment and are wider than rope which helps prevent damage to the tree. I used the use rope to hang my hammock but after getting a set of straps rope will be a thing of the past. The straps make adjustments easy and set up a lot quicker.



Tarp/Rain Fly- This can be a simple square plastic tarp, a purpose-built hammock tarp or even a fly that completely encloses the hammock. These help to keep you dry in the rain, a barrier from winds and provide shade for daytime relaxing. It's important to get a tarp that is fairly wide or extends past the bottom of your hammock when you are laying in it for the best protection. This also provides a space to keep gear covered. With a set of trekking poles or even 2 sticks you can set your tarp up like an awning for sheltered space when you are awake.



Useful Accessories:

Carabiners- Not all hammocks will come with these but they are a great way to attach your hammock to your suspension straps. It's important to use a carabiner that is actually rated to hold weight to support hanging a hammock.



These weight capacities are typically engraved or embossed into the carabiner itself.

Gear Sling- These are basically mini hammocks that allow you to store gear off the ground under your hammock. If you are expecting rain on your trip the gear sling provides a great spot to keep your boots and pack off the ground out of the rain.



Insulating blanket/wrap-These are basically insulated quilts that wrap around the exterior of your hammock to give you more insulation during the winter. When sleeping in a tent the bottom of your sleeping bag gets compressed but you are insulated from the cold air by your ground pad or just the ground. With a hammock your backside will be exposed to the air with no barrier. While this can be wonderful during warmer weather colder temperatures may require the use of an insulating wrap or ground pad. Using the wrap around quilt also makes it a little easier to get in and out of your hammock versus unzipping out of a sleeping bag. When using an insulating blanket around your hammock you may still want something to use on top of you.

Personally, I use my mummy sleeping bag and this works fine.



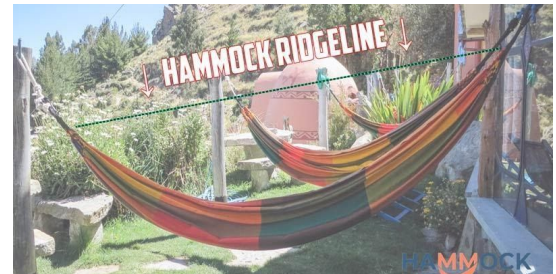
Ground pad- Not just for the ground anymore! Some hammocks have a sleeve that allows you to slide a ground pad into the hammock; this helps to give you another insulation barrier against cold air outside of the hammock.



This can also help to give the hammock some support if you don't prefer the cocoon feeling. If your hammock doesn't have the sleeve you can still place a ground pad in the hammock to lay on but it may move around through the night and wind up on your side. Ground pads can be made from mylar bubble wrap insulation, foam, or inflatable.



Ridgeline rope- This is just a long piece of paracord or small rope you would tie from anchor point to anchor point above your hammock or can be attached to the ropes on the end of the hammock. This can be used to help support a tarp but is also great for hanging a lantern, water bottle or whatever else you might need easy access to while in your hammock.



Hammock Stands- These are better for car camping or around the house use and not so much for backpacking. They provide a structure for you to mount your hammock to if no trees are around.

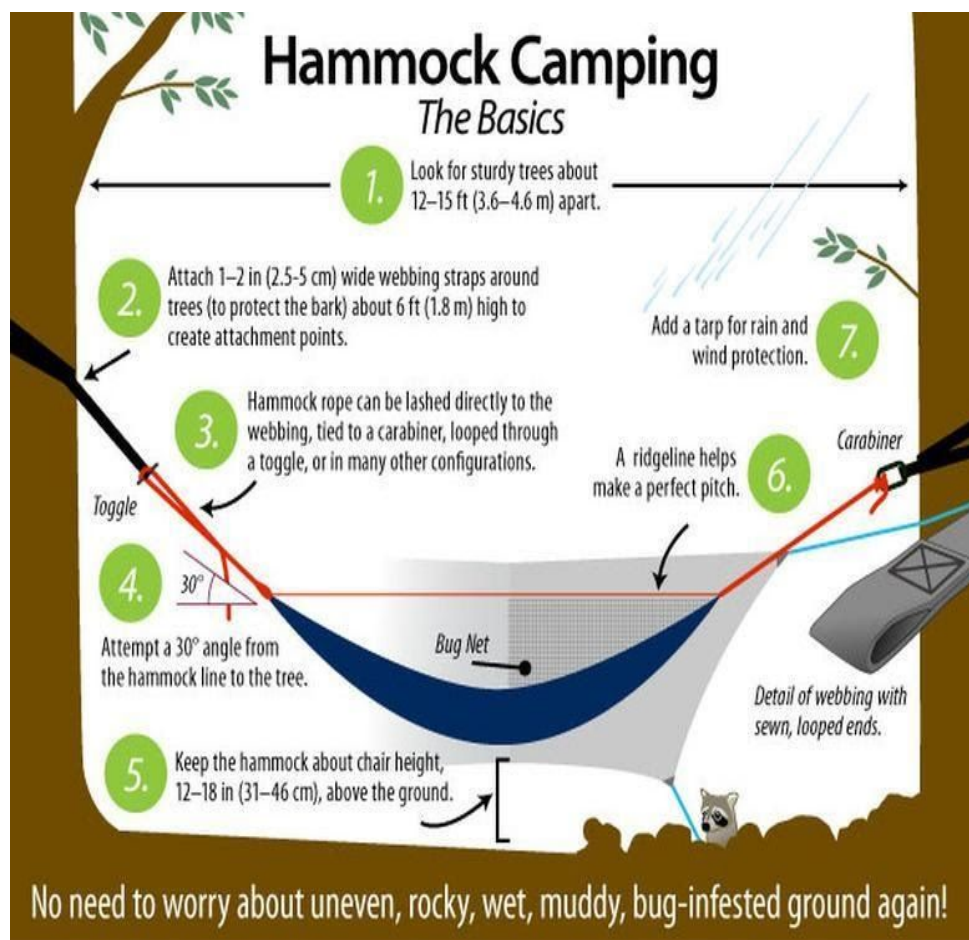


LED string lights- These can be a fun way to trick out your tent and provide you with some ambient light around your campsite.

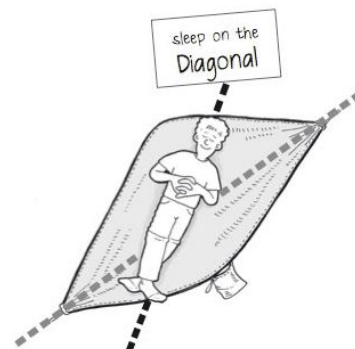


Hammock camping tips:

- Set it up at home or a local park before your trip. This way you will be ready to roll once you are at your campsite and you will have more time to sit back and relax. If you can sleep in it overnight in your backyard that's great too. It takes some getting used to camping in a hammock and remembering you are hanging in the air when you get up for that 2am bathroom break!
- Pick sturdy trees far enough apart so you can hang your hammock taut but not too tight. Once you have it hung, lay back in your hammock for a minute or two to allow the hammock to stretch and straps to tighten. A lot of times you may need to readjust the straps a little tighter after you've laid in your hammock. Some people suggest having your suspension straps hang at a 30-degree angle from the horizontal. Test out different levels of tightness to see which position you find most comfortable for you.

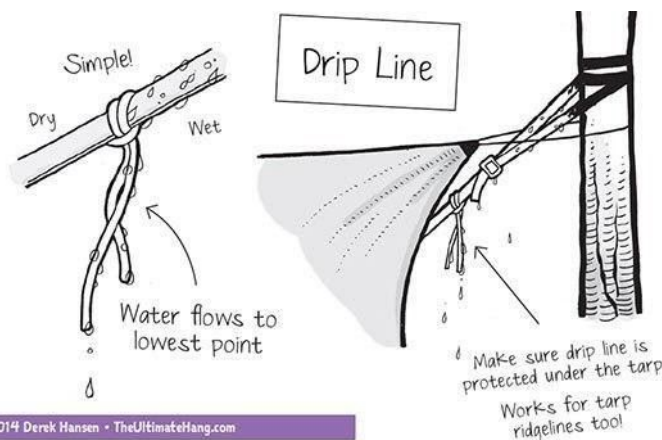


- Position yourself diagonal in the hammock not parallel! Your head and feet should be pushing on the sides of the hammock making it wider and giving you more room. This will be way more comfortable than laying parallel which will make your hammock like a cocoon.



- While a tight hammock may be best for sleeping you may prefer to have a little more sag in your setup when just lounging around and taking in the views. They are also comfortable to use as a chair and sit perpendicular to the hammock with your feet sticking out the side

- Be sure to inspect the trees you use to ensure they are strong enough and living but also for any broken branches that may be hanging above in the tree. No one wants that surprise in the middle of the night when the breeze picks up!
- If rain is a possibility but you are well equipped with your tarp be sure to put some drip lines on the straps supporting the hammock. This can be as simple as a piece of paracord tied tightly around your strap just under the tarp. This will help to prevent water from running down your suspension straps and wetting your hammock.



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