

Camp Guys and Manly Camping Trips

Anytime of year is a good time to go camping but July, for me, is one of the best months for a multi-day trip with the boys. Sorry, but no camp girls are allowed. These camp-guy-only excursions (to get away from the day-job, family, city, wife, or whatever) are an essential part of male sanity.

Of-course these camping trips are full of ritualistic expressions of man behaviour. From the first ceremonial cigars to the campfire size/maintenance and to the morning-after beer and clam, the event is a study in male devolution. And as a bonus, it not only feels good going on one of these liver-lung-gut punishing trips, it also feels good when you come home from one—back to the comforts of the civilized life. A basic rule for these trips is as follows: If you don't come back home, exhausted, purged, (with a new appreciation for female sensibility)—and smelling/looking like a three-day-old jackfish carcass, you just weren't trying hard enough.

One thing about going out with a few guys, say anywhere from 3-5, is how the camp roles and organization naturally unfolds. Camp guys don't want to spend too much time figuring out who is who, and who is doing what. (Surprise!), men are not like women in these matters. Women tend to prefer to verbalize and even negotiate such things as cooking and cleaning schedules, grocery lists, etc. Most men (when there are no women around) usually fall into an unspoken arrangement of duties and roles.

Men are like this because we have a kind of unspoken understanding about life. It's a simple rule: Don't be a moron. If someone, for example, throws away the bacon grease that the cook was saving for the hash brown potatoes, he's likely to apologize profusely and maybe even offer to fry up another pound to get some fresh grease. It all works out, generally, because men understand, that if you do it again, you could get a shot in the head. And it almost never gets to that level. There is just too much beer to be consumed, too many stories to tell, too much food to eat, too many fish to catch, and too few of these great times.

One type of camp guy is the “Camp King.” This type of camp guy is someone whom everyone knows (and likes) and usually, although not always, initiates the fishing (or hunting) trip. Camp kings are natural born leaders. And although most guy-only camping trips are egalitarian, there has to be some sort of leader. Luckily, in my life, I've known several of these kinds of men, and I've noticed that they all seem to be of the same big-headed genotype.

They usually have short, straightforward names like “Dave” or “Ken.” I really don't know why, but I have never known a camp king with a name like “Percy” or “Francisco.” If any camp king was christened with some unfortunate name like “Clarence” or “Nigel,” he would have to undergo some serious re-christening in order to become a camp king.

You cannot even shorten those names like you can with names like “Jamie” or “Owen.” A guy named “Jamie,” for instance, could—and would absolutely have to be—shortened to “Jay” to be even considered as a camp king. Saying something like, “I’m going camping with *Jamie*,” doesn’t sound right.

There are, of-course, other types of camp guys. For example, there’s the “Gun-nut Camp Guy.” He’s the one who seems to always have a new gun. And he remembers details like the powder burn rate difference between a 170 grain 30-30 and a 150 grain .223. He also assumes that everyone is as interested as he is in muzzle velocities.

Next, we have the “Truck-nut Camp Guy.” These guys always have a big, beautiful (usually very clean) truck: one-ton diesels are common with these guys. One thing however: These truck-nut camp guys never seem to buy much beer, or want to go into rough areas. You usually can see them get edgy after a couple of days in the bush—and I think it’s because they are too far away from a car wash.

There is also the “Camp Cook.” These valuable camp guys are able to cook the most amazing foods on a Coleman or a fire. I’ve seen a few camp cooks who can make eggs Benedict on a single burner unit!

Usually you can find the “Camp Klutz” also in the retinue. These are the guys who are always getting into a mess. They do things like drop a stump on their toes, get tangled up in their belly boats, snap lines and rods, spill beers, and even burn themselves on the stove, fire, and/or with their lighter.

Next are the various levels of cleanliness for camp guys. The extremes are easy to identify. First there are the “Super-clean Camp Guys.” These are those men who—somehow—can keep their moustache looking like it was freshly groomed even after a three day camp out. (Don’t ask me how they do it.) They contrast sharply with the “Pigpen Camp Guys.” These men can look rough after carrying their first load of fire wood. And by the end of the camp out, they can look and smell worse than a bear’s ass during blueberry season.

There are a lot of other types of camp guys that I haven’t mentioned, like the “Gadget-nut Camp Guy,” the “Quad Camp Guy,” and the “Pyromaniac Camp Guy.” Contrary to some uninformed opinions, camp guys are—really!—a complex species. We are more evolved than worms, for instance. And we need these times together to return to our elemental hunter/gatherer genetic roots. Just give me a tent, a truck, a cooler of meat and beer and group of camp-guy friends and I can rinse my brain, fill my stomach, and least we forget, hunt and fish.