

SO YOU WANT TO...take the kids camping

Sunday, July 08, 2007 - By Helen Boylan

What it is: a great way to enjoy the outdoors. It's also an opportunity to alleviate boredom during the school holidays and a good way to spend quality, fun time with your children.

What it's not: five-star luxury.

What you need: the right equipment. Basic equipment includes shelter - weatherproof tent(s) big enough for the group; bedding - a combination of sleeping bags and roll-mats; and cooking utensils - a small gas stove, disposable instant barbecues, cool box, plastic cups, plates and cutlery; cooking utensils, a tin opener and a sharp knife.

Torches, toilet roll, board games, cards, a camera and plastic bags for rubbish are also essential, as are ear plugs if you are a light sleeper.

Where to do it: there are many camping grounds in Ireland, which will have flat earth on which to pitch tents, facilities such as toilets, showers and waste disposal, and other campers for children to make friends with.

What to do: book ahead. Arrive early, register at the campground office and make use of the daylight in choosing the best camping area.

If the weather is hot, choose a shady spot close to a water source. Find a level cooking area away from brush or leaves.

Campers should be aware of others around them and keep noise levels down after dark.

Keep a checklist of all gear to avoid leaving any items behind.

Clean utensils thoroughly to avert food poisoning. Leave a clean campsite when you go and dispose of rubbish properly.



When you get home after the holiday, unpack, unload, wash, dry and store all equipment.

What not to do: cook in your tent or leave an unattended campfire burning.

Avoid pitching a tent under trees (they are lightening targets and if it rains, and you'll get rained on long after the rain has stopped).

Don't leave food unattended outside the tent as it will attract wildlife.

When to do it: the summer months when the children are off school give a better chance of drier, warmer weather.

Whatever the time of year, go prepared for rain and cold spells.

Where to go: There are hundreds of campsites around the country, but only a handful of good ones to check out.

Useful websites:

www.dublinwicklowcamping.com (**Roundwood Caravan & Camping Park**)

www.camping-holidaysireland.com;

www.camping-ireland.ie;

www.gocampingireland.com;

www.ireland.ie (Failte Ireland);

www.iccc.ie (The Irish Camping and Caravan Club);

www.campingeurope.com;

www.irishferries.com.