

HIKER-NOTE:

Camping in a Hammock

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Have you ever considered using a hammock as an alternative to the traditional tent? Many others have! Hammocks are becoming quite popular not only for backpackers but also for the common camper. These people are often referred to as “treehangers.” With a little practice, common sense and preparation, a hammock can be used in just about any type of weather – rain, cold, high winds, etc. Rain flies, hand warmers, and netting keep you out of the elements, toasty warm and away from the nagging bugs.

There are many advantages to using a hammock when camping. They are lightweight and are more affordable than an average tent. They are easy to set up and take down. They can be used in just about any type of landscape. And most important, they are **extremely comfortable**. In addition to a good night’s sleep, camping hammocks also provide a great place to relax when hanging out around camp.

Using a hammock is fun and quite easy to do. Like anything else, experience teaches you the best lessons. Here are just a couple common mistakes that you should be sure to avoid:

- **Look out for dead trees.** Always be sure that you evaluate the integrity of the trees you are planning to tie your hammock to. Be sure they are sturdy and will not collapse when put under stress.
- **Examine your ropes for wear.** A damaged rope weakens your hammocks performance and can easily break with your weight. Wrap your ropes around trees at least twice before tying your knots. This will reduce the wear on your ropes and also protect the trees.

Tying good knots is **essential** when using hammocks. The bowline, taut-line hitch, and the fisherman’s knots are the three most important. A bowline knot is a strong, solid knot and should be used to tie the ropes around the trees that support your weight. Use the taut-line hitch for your rain flies. These knots are easily tightened or loosened based on your needs. Note: Rain fly ropes should NOT be used to support your weight in the hammock. Finally, the fisherman’s knot is used to attach ropes together for extension purposes. Spend some time practicing these knots and you should not have any problems hanging your hammock correctly and safely.

Lying in a hammock is one of the most effective ways to reduce stress and is a great way to relax. The way that the hammock conforms to your body’s natural shape and the fact that your body’s weight is so evenly distributed gives you a feeling of weightlessness.

Hammocks are a great alternative when camping and are a wonderful addition for backyard enjoyment. The benefits are definitely worth your consideration!