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The Great Outdoors

Excuse me but I am baffled about the word camping as used in Canada. I mean no offence to anybody but this is a perplexing and controversial subject.

Camping in South Africa some fifty years ago hardly existed except for a few intrepid explorers, and it was certainly something you did with several other people for the safety factor. Lone couples who sought privacy by driving in the bush for some hanky-panky were regularly killed, as were the foolish solitary campers.

These incidents were frequently reported in the papers, and as a result couples wishing to indulge in some premarital intimacies had designated safe spots to which they would drive, park side by side and feel relatively secure in the company of other fondlers

Of course these spots were well known to the South African Police, who acted as morality enforcers and delighted in scaring the living bejesus out of the amorous couples. They would creep up on either side of the car, leap up, hammer on the windows and shine their flashlight on the unfortunate pair. Hence the local drive-in cinemas were extremely popular and this had very little to do with cinematic content.

South Africans in those days also wished to get away and rough it up a bit. Hence the beach cottage was exceptionally fashionable as a getaway. They might be a little remote but they did have locking doors and all buildings small, large, humble or pretentious had burglar guards. At least you felt safe.

When we arrived in Canada we were amazed at all the designated camp sites and the fact that nearly everyone seemed to be involved in the pursuit of enjoying the great outdoors and camping. Bear in mind that this was in the late seventies and well before the time of the mobile Taj Mahal. In those days it was tents or modest sized campers and the campground were charmingly rustic and somewhat primitive.

In the Spring of 1978 we bought a Westphalia VW camper and in July we set off for three weeks to investigate our new country. Our trip took us to Prince Rupert and then backtracked to Prince

George, up to Peace River, down to Lesser Slave Lake and finally we returned home.

Our children were seven, five and three years and in their prime argumentative stage of life and, to complicate matters, we had Ruff, our neurotic German Sheppard. We had intended to leave him at a dog kennel but the last time he had entered one of these facilities he landed up in the hold of a plane for a thirty-six hour trip to Canada. We literally had to drag him into the enclosure which had a six-foot high fence. That crazy dog climbed the fence and ran after the car as we were leaving. So we took him with us.

The Westphalia had basic amenities. A tiny stove and even smaller sink. A pop-up roof with a bed where the kids slept and make-up couch/bed where we slept. Space was at a premium with clothes, bedding, camping equipment, food supplies and kids toys all vying for some part of it. When we arrived at a camp site we would ingeniously rig up a blue tarpaulin with the aid of rope and surrounding trees. The children would be sent off to gather firewood which usually comprised of twigs and small branches and, if it was a bush camp, we would build a cooking fireplace out of rocks. We soon learned that the bush camps were the most fun because the dog and kids could give full vent to their pent up energy without disturbing anybody but the local fauna. We only stayed in organized campsite if we could not find a suitable bush campsite.

We sold the Westphalia about a year later and for the next ten years we had a passenger van and tents and a few favourite bush camps that we regularly visited. We swam and bathed in cold icy mountain streams and rivers and warmed ourselves by the campfire. Simone, Philip and I were avid fishermen so we only chose those camps where the fishing was really good. Naturally fresh trout was nearly always on the menu.

We graduated from tents to a tent trailer and travelled from Carstairs to the Queen Charlottes and back.

Recently however, we acquired a 22-foot trailer. Now we did not plan to do this but it so happened that we brought in a migrant farm labourer from Mexico and we housed him in a 30-foot trailer complete with slide-outs, TV and every other modern convenience. Last year he did not return so we traded it down for a smaller ultra light unit that we could tow with the Jeep and by so doing joined the ranks of sissy campers.

Gone are the good old days when you loaded up a couple of boxes of food, camping gear, kerosene lamps, cool box, bathroom spade, ax, rope, tarpaulins and fishing gear. Herald in the new age camper with all its modern conveniences and inconveniences as well. There is a list as long as both arms of things that has to be attended to before you take the monster out. Fill the gas tanks. Flush and clean the potable water tank and replace with clean water that has to be delivered with a special hose in case your common garden hose taints the water. Make sure that the batteries are charged. Prep the waste tanks with chemicals and make sure you have special toilet paper that dissolves. Make sure the finicky fridge is working and stock it.

Then there is the "Use it to its full potential" factor. Which translates into a bottle of cooking oil being replaced by three different gourmets' oils. Or the simple lemon has companions such as balsamic, wine and raspberry vinegars to suit every culinary circumstance. The kitchen cupboard spaces become crammed with every exotic substance that would have been ludicrous at a bush camp and which must be loaded and unloaded. Then there is the bar. I mean if you are going to have a choice of oils, vinegars snacks can you imagine the thought, preparation and loading time devoted to this department.

Well eventually after days of preparation you are ready to depart. But wait... you have to check a whole bunch of things. Make sure the slide is in. Close all those little cupboards underneath and on the sides of the trailer. Check all windows and vents are closed. Make sure the stairs are folded away. Departure time is always three to four hours past the planned time.

Once on the road you are well aware that something is radically wrong with your gas gauge because an hour ago when you left the house it was reading a full tank. Now you are down to a quarter of a tank with the possibility of being stranded on the highway before reaching the next service station.

In the beginning of August we had a family camp-out at Wolf Lake which is situated about fifty miles South of Edson in the bush. The trip to Rocky Mountain House was relatively uneventful. However, as soon as we took the dirt road going North we hit a rain storm that turned the road into a slick and slippery mud trail that reduced our speed to twenty five kilometers per hour in full four wheel drive. The camper swayed from side to side and twice we nearly

lost the whole caboodle. Of course Tucker, who is not a good traveler and is always dosed up with Graval, tossed his cookies. Peaches, our Moluccan Cockatoo was terrified by the swaying and shrieked in her little travel cage so that I had to take her out and comfort her while Sue struggled to drive.

We arrived at the camp with the rain still pouring and about two hours later than we should have. After parking the camper so that everything is facing in the right direction a series of steps have to be followed. Disengage the camper from vehicle. Set wooden blocks under the levelers and level the camper so that the darn fridge will work. Pull out the awning so that when you enter or exit the camper you are protected from the elements – in this case the steady downpour. Enter the camper and pick up all the stuff that has been flung out of the flimsy cupboards by the insane swaying of the camper on the greasy roads. Make sure all systems are working. Drink a large scotch.

That night as we lay in bed I was rather thankful for the protected creature comforts afforded by this awkward monster we had hauled across some of the worst road conditions I have ever travelled. I was just drifting off into a contented sleep when suddenly the camper was violently rocked by a fierce gust of wind and there was a loud bang as the awning was ripped from its anchors and frame, flipped over the camper to the other side while still being attached. There was nothing we could do whilst the wind was howling but to be tormented by the flapping awning for the rest of the night.

Despite all of this we still managed to have a camping experience cooking our food on a fire and spending more time enjoying nature than what the camper had to offer. Even though we have a camper we still seek the solitude of those campsites that will allow us to feel like we are in the bush, unlike the new-age civilized campground where the campers are all parked side by side length-wise with a comfortable fifteen feet of space between each camper and not a tree in sight thereby reducing the risk of birds pooping on the campers.

They are certainly fortunate as they do have power hookups and connections to fresh water, sewer and in some places to cable TV so that the occupants may enjoy all the creature comforts of home including microwave, air-conditioning and home theatre systems. To sweeten the pot they can even BBQ outside while enjoying a real fire and burning wood that sells for the reasonable price of ten dollars a small bundle. There is truly a sense of security knowing that there are no bears in the vicinity and the only cougars prowling around are of the two legged variety.

It kind of reminds me of all the cars parked in row without the threat of the South African Police.



Elegant Dinner at the Farm Saturday Evenings

October 2, 9, 16 & 30

Last year when we introduced this elegant evening at its reasonable price we had an excellent response.

We will again be offering three courses: soup, salad and main dish with two or three selections in each course for a reasonable fee of \$40.

Dessert will be an optional fourth course for an additional cost of \$10. The emphasis will be on Alberta grown and wherever possible organic and wholesome food, some of which will have come from our own gardens.

**Seating between 6 and 7 pm.
Reservations are essential.**



OTHER CHRISTMAS LOCATIONS

NORTHLAND MALL | CALGARY
CORNER OF CROWCHILD AND SHAGGANAPPI
MID OCTOBER, NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

AGRI TRADE | RED DEER
WESTERNER PARK
10TH - 13TH NOVEMBER

SPRUCE MEADOWS | CALGARY
CHRISTMAS MARKET
NOVEMBER 12TH - 14TH
NOVEMBER 19TH - 21ST

Let us host your
PRIVATE FUNCTION or CHRISTMAS PARTY
We can customize a special menu and include entertainment of your choice. We would be glad to discuss your needs.
Call us at 1.800.679.7999 today.

Murder Mystery Night

Death on the Docket

The staff of Stetsons and Holsters, Calgary's top law firm, is having a morale-boosting dinner party. It might be a case of too little too late. Ever since a certain someone took over as managing lawyer, things S&H have literally gone to hell-in-a-hand-basket. The staff at this firm are an eclectic mix of personalities. Everyone tries to put on a good face, but behind the scenes it is nasty.

23rd October

Cocktails 6:00 Dinner 7:00 pm

\$80 per person

Service and GST included

Reservations essential. This is a ticketed event.

Come enjoy our award-winning buffet!

Ladies' Night

An entertaining evening. Fabulous Buffet.
Fashion Show and Guest Speaker

Dan Peters:

Economic empowerment for African women

Saturday November 6

Cocktails from 6:00 pm Dinner at 7:00 pm

\$35.00

(does not include GST or gratuities)

Reservations essential



CHRISTMAS TRADITION

at
PaSu Farm

Years ago, before we had the shop, we used to have an **OPEN HOUSE** at the farm on weekends in December. This tradition still continues and we offer **FREE Christmas Cake and hot cider** (*in the boutique only*).

Let us take the stress out of your shopping by pampering you in a relaxed environment far from the maddening crowds.

HELP WANTED

This Christmas season we are looking for retail staff for our downtown locations as well as the main store on the farm. If you might be interested please contact Sue at 403 337 2800.

Victorian Christmas Dinners

Sat. 27th November
Fri. 3rd, 10th & 17th December
6.00 pm Cocktails 🍷 7.00 pm Dinner

Once again we will be presenting our elegant seven-course, plate service, English Victorian Christmas Dinner. The entrée will be a choice between Roast Leg of Lamb and Prime Rib.

To create a warm and hospitable atmosphere our staff will be dressed in Victorian garb, candles and crackers will be placed on the table and the plum pudding will be flamed for all to see.

\$80.00 per person

Reservations and tickets ESSENTIAL.
Service & GST included in the above price.



Christmas Hours

EXTRA SHOPPING HOURS
For your convenience we will be open in December on Friday nights for shopping until 8 pm.

ALSO
The Mondays in December before Christmas we will be open from 11 am to 5 pm
(The restaurant will not be open on these Mondays.)

Complete your shopping or find goodies for your OWN wish list with a visit to PaSu Farm!

Christmas Dinner Theatres

CAROUSEL PRODUCTIONS

Once again we will be using Carousel Productions. They are a professional group of actors that give their best in their performances.

Saturday 4th December

Six Deadly Sins

Saturday 11th December

No Accounting for Murder

Please phone for details of the plays. We can tell you that they are humorous and in good taste.



Tickets are \$80.00

Includes GST & Gratuities on meal and show.

Advance booking and ticket purchase essential.

Cocktails from 6:00 pm • Dinner served at 7:15 pm