



RECONNECTING WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY AND PREFERENCE FOR FREE WI-FI SPURS MODERN CAMPING

Free Wi-Fi ranks as one of the three most valued campground amenities according to KOA's 2015 North American Camping Report

BILLINGS, Mont. (April 29, 2015) – More campers today prioritize access to free Wi-Fi over traditional camping amenities, such as access to cabins or recreational activities, according to the [2015 North American Camping Report](#), an independent study supported by [Kampgrounds of America, Inc.](#) (KOA).

The must-have camping gear, according to the results of the survey of nearly 3,000 people across the U.S. and Canada, is the cell phone, as 83 percent of all campers bring their mobile phone to the great outdoors.

What's more, the heart wins out over the wallet, as more people today see camping as a way to escape the stress of everyday life than as an affordable vacation option. With Canadians spending an average of two weeks or more camping annually and with 68 percent of Canadian households having camped at some point in time, it's evident that camping is a coveted getaway.

"Camping today is more diverse than ever before, from who's experiencing the great outdoors and how they're planning travel to what amenities they prioritize and why they value camping," said KOA CEO Jim Rogers. "Camping is not a one-size-fits-all travel experience. We've evolved our approach to outdoor hospitality by stressing what's behind our yellow sign to ensure we're matching camper expectations consistently, whether they're enjoying the outdoors with a smartphone in hand or a good old-fashioned map."

Highlights from the 2015 North American Camping Report include the following:

Must-Have Camping Equipment: Wi-Fi and Mobile Phones

Today's campers are more "plugged in" when preparing for camping trips and while at campsites. Of those surveyed, half of all campers (51 percent) claim that they go online at least once a day while camping, and four out of 10 (41 percent) say that having free Wi-Fi influences their decision to stay at a campground.

When selecting which campgrounds to visit and stay, free Wi-Fi ranks as the third most important amenity, behind only clean bathrooms and a kid-friendly environment, and outpaces access to recreational activities such as a campground store, cabins and even safety lighting.

The youngest campers (< 25) are more likely to bring a mobile phone (86 percent), compared to campers age 65+ (77 percent). Conversely, campers 25+ are somewhat more likely to bring along a laptop or notebook (29 percent) compared to the youngest campers (21 percent). Younger campers even say having a smartphone (28 percent) is almost as important as toilet paper (34 percent).

Camping as a Healthy Escape and Relationship Builder

Though the notion of camping as an inexpensive vacation option remains, survey results suggest that while the cash-saving aspect is still important, people are camping to build the emotional connection and relationships with family and friends in nature.

Survey highlights include:

- According to campers, reconnecting with nature (55 percent), reducing stress (54 percent), and spending more time with family and friends (49 percent) are the key reasons they camp. Economic and practical values were only identified as reasons for camping by less than 35 percent of those surveyed.
- Campers are likely to say that camping improves family relationships – in fact, 41 percent "completely agree" with this.
- Additionally, fully 4-in-10 campers (39 percent) suggest that camping has "a great deal of impact" on allowing them to spend more time with family. Another third of campers say that camping has a positive impact on their relationships with family and friends (35 percent) and their emotional well-being (36 percent).
- In comparing U.S. and Canadian responses, Canadian campers are more likely than U.S. campers to travel with and visit friends while camping.

Outdoor Melting Pot

Nearly one in four campers in 2014 identified themselves as either African-American/Black, Asian/Pacific Islander or Hispanic. Other key survey highlights include:

- Multicultural campers in general are more "plugged in" to technology during camping. African-American/Black and Asian/Pacific Islander campers are the most frequent online users with almost two-thirds of survey respondents going online at least once a day while camping.
- Two-thirds (67 percent) of multicultural campers say that they read campground reviews before staying at a campground, compared to 53 percent of white/Caucasian campers.
- According to 2015 Canadian census data, 89 percent of Canadians are Caucasian, but only account for 78 percent of the camping population, while Asian/Pacific Islanders make up 7 percent of the Canadian population but accounted for 13 percent of the camping population.

2015 Season Outlook

Looking ahead to the 2015 camping season, a majority of campers (53 percent) plan to spend more nights camping, and almost half (48 percent) plan to take more trips. Other key findings related to campers' plans for the 2015 season include:

- Canadian campers have a strong tie to provincial parks with 72 percent intending to visit a location in the coming months.
- When asked what has the most impact on their decision to camp more, survey respondents cited spending more time with family and friends (68 percent), exploring new areas (67 percent), and decreased gas prices (60 percent) as the most impactful factors. Fully 6-in-10 U.S. based campers and about half (47 percent) of Canadian campers say that gas prices are having an impact on camping this year.
- Among campers who say that decreased gas prices are impacting their travel plans for the upcoming year, 88 percent plan to visit new areas, 88 percent say it will allow them to camp more often and 86 percent plan to visit new campgrounds.
- A substantially higher proportion of campers (39 percent) say they intend to make reservations via websites in 2015, compared to their typical behavior (29 percent).

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted by Cairn Consulting Group, an independent market research firm with extensive experience in the hospitality and services industries. Two waves of data collection were used, the first was conducted in July of 2014 and the second wave was conducted in January of 2015. The sampling methodology targeted a randomly selected sample of U.S. and Canadian households. In both waves of the survey, sampling was designed to obtain n=2,400 completed survey among representative U.S. households and n=500 completed surveys among representative Canadian households. A sample of n=2,400 U.S. households is associated with a margin of error of +/- 1.99%. Among Canadian households, a sample of n=500 is associated with a margin of error of +/- 4.37%.

All surveys were completed online via an outbound solicitation sent by Survey Sampling International to a randomly selected cross-section of U.S. and Canadian households.

The sample of households was statistically balanced to ensure that the results are in line with overall population figures for age, gender and ethnicity.

ABOUT KAMPGROUNDS OF AMERICA

For more than 50 years, Kampgrounds of America (KOA), the world's largest system of open-to-the-public family campgrounds, has provided millions of campers with fun, memorable adventures. KOA was born in

1962 when founder Dave Drum constructed a campground on the banks of the Yellowstone River in

Billings, Mont. Since then, KOA has grown to more than 480 locations in the U.S. and Canada. KOA's family of properties offers diverse camping experiences, while maintaining the excellent standards and family-friendly atmosphere the company is known for.

ABOUT CAIRN CONSULTING GROUP

Cairn Consulting Group is a market research firm with extensive experience in the hospitality and services industries. For the past several years, Cairn Consulting Group has worked with organizations in the gaming/casino areas, food services/restaurant space, accommodations, travel/tourism and outdoor hospitality, working with clients such as Caesars Entertainment, Pizza Hut, Hollywood Casinos, Chili's, Route 66 RV and Rivers Casinos as well as ongoing collaboration with KOA.

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