

TOWN



NEWS

Dallas Chapter – March 2026

Monthly Meeting March 9th

6-7:30

Karen Turbeville's home

7222 Lakehurst Avenue

Dallas TX, 75230



Karen and Karen
will give a
presentation on
their trip to Nepal.
Come learn about
their adventures.

Refreshments will
be provided.

TOWN ACTIVITIES

Mark your Calendars!!

March 5th-8th

Camping at Inks Lake State Park

Contact Shirley Meurer to reserve your spot

972-890-2491 sameurer@yahoo.com

March 18th-22nd

Camping at Goose Island State Park

Contact Judy Shaw for more details

jshawtx@aol.com

March 26th-29th

Camping at Huntsville State Park

Contact Nancy Lee to sign up

nlee002@tx.rr.com 469-264-4643

April 16th-18th

Camping at Dinosaur Valley State Park

Contact Sharon Fahlberg to sign

up sfahlberg@aol.com 214-991-1234

July 13th thru 18th

Kayaking/Rafting Trip on the Rogue River in Oregon

Contact Shirley for details 972-890-2491

April 30th -May 3rd

Camping at Daingerfield State Park

Contact Marie Waterman to sign up

214-733-3222

Saturday June 6th from 1-5 PM

Pool Party

Join us at Karen King's for a relaxing day in the country.

247 Barnes Bridge Road, Sunnyvale, 75182.

Saturday, June 27th 10-4 PM

Day of fun on Cedar Creek Lake

2182 Hickory St., Mabank, TX 75156

Hosted by Mary Nester and Mar Burris

RSVP to 214-316-8960

August 15th, 2-5 PM

Afternoon at the Pool

Barb Cutter's Home

2915 Scarborough Ln W

Colleyville Tx, 76034

Monthly Meetings 6pm – 7:30pm

2nd Monday of the Month

Contact Shirley to host



PRAYER FLAGS

The Benefits Of Tent Camping

Discover the joys of tent camping! From deepening your connection to nature and saving money to enhancing mental health, explore the numerous benefits of this adventure.

The Benefits of Tent Camping

I remember my first experience with tent camping fondly. The night air was crisp, and the stars above twinkled with a brilliance that felt almost too perfect to be real. I was surrounded by nature, far away from the bustling city, and for the first time in a long while, I felt at peace. The gentle rustle of leaves and the distant call of an owl became

the soundtrack of my newly found freedom. If you're considering tent camping or just curious about its merits, let me share the myriad benefits that come with it.

Connecting with Nature

As someone who has spent far too many hours hunched over a computer screen, tent camping feels like an antidote to my sedentary lifestyle. There's something incredibly grounding about immersing myself in the natural world. Each time I zip open that tent and step outside, I am greeted by the earthy aroma of pine, the chorus of chirping crickets, and the cool breeze that brushes against my skin. By tent camping, I reconnect with nature in a way that feels authentic and restorative. This connection reminds me that I am part of something larger, something wonderfully alive and ever-changing.

Through public camping grounds or pristine national parks, I have found that every location offers its own unique charm. The towering trees, rich foliage, and local wildlife paint a picture I can never replicate through a screen. Moments such as watching a family of deer cautiously approach my campsite or marveling at the intricate patterns of a spider's web help me appreciate the beauty of the world around me. This deep connection with nature helps me reset my perspective; I often leave with a sense of rejuvenation that can rarely be found elsewhere.

Cost-Effective Getaway

One of the standout benefits of tent camping is how cost-effective it is. Unlike resort stays or fancy hotels, camping allows me to enjoy the great outdoors without breaking the bank. I often find that my biggest expenses involve gas, food, and a modest campsite fee — much less than what I would typically spend on comfortable lodging. Moreover, I tend to pack my own meals, which not only saves money but also adds an element of fun to the whole experience. Whether it's roasting marshmallows over a fire or whipping up breakfast on a portable stove, meal prep feels like an adventure in itself when I'm outdoors.

Additionally, tent camping opens up an array of destinations that aren't always accessible via traditional accommodations. With a tent, I can choose a site near a lake for some paddleboarding, a mountain filled with hiking trails, or even a secluded spot off the beaten path. Each camping trip can translate into a mini-vacation without the steep price tags associated with conventional travelers' hotspots. As someone who loves to explore, this rapidly becomes one of my favorite aspects of tent camping.

Simplicity and Mindfulness

In an age dominated by digital distractions and constant notifications, I find immense joy in the simplicity of tent camping. It encourages a lifestyle that prioritizes essential living. There is something bracing about packing only what is necessary: a sleeping bag, a cooking setup, and a few clothes. When I set up my tent, I feel a sense of

accomplishment. The effort involved in creating a cozy space provides a satisfaction that streaming services and video games could never replicate.

What's even more liberating about camping is the chance to practice mindfulness. When I step outside my tent in the morning and feel the dew beneath my feet, it becomes a reminder to slow down and savor the moment. Instead of worrying about daily tasks or social media updates, I'm often consumed by the sounds of nature. The gentle hum of bees, the rustling of leaves, and the distant flow of a stream help ground me in the present. In this state, I can truly appreciate life as it is, unfiltered and raw.

Building Bonds

Tent camping is also about relationships and creating memories with those I care about. Whether it's family, friends, or even a chance rendezvous with nature-loving strangers, sitting around a campfire fosters a connection that can sometimes get lost in our day-to-day lives. I've shared stories that have stretched long into the night, laughed until I was breathless, and even found solace in moments of silence together.

Also, helping my companions set up their tents, gather firewood, or prepare meals creates a sense of teamwork and bonding that is genuinely heartwarming. It allows me to feel connected to others in a way that busy city life rarely affords. In those moments, I genuinely believe that nothing can replace the warmth of sitting around a fire, sharing tales, laughter, and maybe a little too much s'mores.

Physical Health Benefits

There's no denying that tent camping comes with a plethora of physical health benefits. Sleeping in a tent immersed in nature often leads to better rest. Combined with fresh air, this can result in improved sleep quality. When the sunlight peeks through my tent in the morning, I feel inclined to rise early, opening myself to a day filled with possibilities. The opportunity to hike, swim, or kayak nudges me to engage in physical activities that easily outshine the lethargy of sofa-sitting.

Moreover, camping encourages healthy eating habits. The act of preparing meals outside pushes me to be creative with food. I find myself gravitating toward fresher, healthier ingredients and, let's be honest, there's nothing quite like a meal cooked over an open fire. The compelling flavors of grilled vegetables and seasoned meat taste even better when enjoyed in the great outdoors. The combination of physical activity and nutritious meals does wonders for my overall well-being.

Mental Health Restoration

The mental health benefits of tent camping are simply unmatched. Stepping away from the whirlwind of everyday life provides me with a much-needed mental reset. Nature acts as a balm for my racing thoughts. The experience of camping allows me to step back, breathe deeply, and reflect on what truly matters. Hiking through picturesque

trails clears my mind and fosters creativity; I often return from these trips with new ideas and clarity. Additionally, I've noticed that tent camping helps me develop resilience. The unpredictability of the weather and the challenges that come with setting up a campsite can be daunting, but overcoming them fills me with a sense of accomplishment. These experiences remind me that I'm capable of adapting and thriving, even in imperfect conditions. When I face life's obstacles after a camping trip, I am often more prepared to tackle them with a renewed outlook.

Learning New Skills

Tent camping has introduced me to an array of skills that I never knew I wanted to acquire. From pitching a tent to making a fire, each camping trip feels like a masterclass in outdoor survival. I remember the first time I attempted to set up a tent — what a comical disaster it was! But over time, as I got the hang of things, I began to enjoy the challenge of ensuring everything was in order. Eventually, I could help others with their tents, contributing to my ever-growing skillset.

Additionally, I find immense joy in cooking outdoors. There's a certain thrill that comes with preparing meals using only a camp stove or an open flame. I've learned grilling techniques, how to use a Dutch oven, and even created some impromptu recipes based on what I could scavenge from our camp box. Tent camping inspires me to be resourceful, creative, and, quite frankly, just a little adventurous.

Digital Detox

In an age where screens dominate nearly every aspect of life, tent camping offers a refreshing digital detox. I love that before I set up camp, I often leave my devices in the car, their screens dark and quiet. Instead of scrolling through social media, I rediscover the delight of staring at the stars, listening to the sound of waves, or capturing candid moments with loved ones. How liberating it feels to engage in face-to-face conversations instead of texting or scrolling!

This digital detox cultivates mindfulness and presence; it compels me to observe and savor the beauty around me. I enjoy capturing my experiences with pen and paper, jotting thoughts in a journal rather than tapping them out on a keyboard. With each camping experience, I recognize the value of living in the moment without the constant pull of the digital world.

Sense of Adventure

Tent camping brings a sense of adventure into my life that feels exhilarating. Each trip presents new challenges and surprises — whether it's unearthing a hidden trail, discovering a new hiking route, or encountering wildlife in their natural home. I relish the anticipation of embarking on road trips filled with spontaneous stops at scenic lookouts, quaint diners, and bizarre roadside attractions along the way.

But the adventure doesn't stop with the destination; it continues at the campsite itself. Every time I unpack my gear, I feel a thrill as I set up my temporary home in a new location. There's an inherent uncertainty because, while I may know the basics, I never quite know what will unfold in nature. It's this unpredictability that fuels my passion for camping; every experience is a story waiting to be shared.

Environmental Awareness

Tent camping has also deepened my understanding and love for the environment. Being so close to nature makes me appreciate the delicate balance of ecosystems and the importance of conservation. I've learned about Leave No Trace principles, ensuring I minimize my impact on the places I visit. I've embraced responsible camping habits, such as picking up waste, respecting wildlife, and staying on designated trails.

As I spend time outdoors, I witness the consequences of human impact on nature firsthand. This has turned camping into an educational experience, where I've actively engaged with local flora, fauna, and conservation practices. I've come to realize just how vital it is to protect these beautiful spaces, not just for my enjoyment but for generations to come.

Diversifying Experience

Tent camping invites a variety of experiences that I may not encounter during hotel stays. Whether I'm cozying up in a wooded setting or setting up camp beside a serene lake, each trip introduces me to new landscapes that impact my emotions and thoughts. The endless variety of campsites, from mountains to beaches, means I'm never bored. Each visit is as unique as the scenery surrounding it.

Moreover, camping allows me to try different activities I might never consider otherwise. I've gone fishing, kayaking, hiking, rock climbing, and even stargazing. Every adventure pushes me out of my comfort zone, broadening my horizons and introducing me to new joys. It's a constant reminder that the world is a vast, colorful tapestry — each thread waiting to be explored and appreciated.

A Journey Towards Self-Discovery

Finally, tent camping has sparked a journey of self-discovery that continues to shape who I am. At times, when I sit alone by the campfire, I reflect on my life, priorities, and dreams. The solitude of camping often brings clarity about both my strengths and weaknesses, allowing me to grow in unexpected ways. It encourages introspection, sometimes revealing what I want from life and how to achieve it.

This sense of self-discovery fosters resilience, adaptability, and self-awareness. Each camping trip encourages me to embrace my authentic self, outside of the expectations that often accompany modern life. By stepping away from my daily routine, I

understand better who I am, what matters to me, and how I can evolve moving forward.

In conclusion, tent camping is about embracing life in all its beauty and challenges. It connects me to nature, fosters relationships, improves my health, and opens doors to new experiences. If you haven't tried it yet, I cannot recommend it enough. As I continue my own adventures, I encourage you to grab a tent and set off on your journey into the wild.

Written by Lawrence Chamberlin

How to Choose the Best Tent (by an outdoor guide!)

Looking to find the best camping tent for you? There's a lot to consider when choosing a tent, including the weather, the surface you'll be camping on, and whether you're backpacking, canoe camping, or car camping. Here are the best camping tents for your money, simplified:

How to choose the best camping tent for beginners:

The best tent for you depends on what you want to use it for, your budget, and more! Here are a few of the things we'll consider when helping you choose the best camping tent for you:

- **Activity:** will you be backpacking, car camping, canoe camping, pack rafting, or kayak camping? Certain tents are better for certain activities. If you're base camping out of your car in a state park for a week, you probably want a larger tent with more space to set up. However if you're backpacking, you're going to want a lightweight tent that is easy to setup and tear down.
- **Location & Weather:** Are you headed somewhere rainy and stormy? Make sure you get a tent that can handle constant downpour. Are you sea kayak camping the coast? Consider that you might be camping on sand, and will want a free standing tent. (A free standing tent is a tent that does not need stakes to be useable.)
- **Budget:** How much are you willing to spend on a tent? Different tents are better suited to different activities, and finding the best all-around tent for every activity while also staying within budget is difficult (... but not that difficult, it's the [REI Halfdome 2+](#)). Here we'll cover budget options as well as more expensive choices. **The primary difference when it comes to price will be weight; a**

cheaper tent is not necessarily more likely to break or tear, but it is going to be heavier and larger than more expensive choices, and more difficult to pack.

- Comfort: Certain tent features make for a more comfortable camping experience than others. A large vestibule, or space to put gear under the rainfly but not inside the tent, two doors instead of one, vents, and more can make for a more comfortable camping experience.

1) [REI Halfdome 2+](#): Best all Around Beginner Camping Tent

The [REI Halfdome](#) is a classic tested and true tent. This is the tent I used for a three-week fall expedition paddle on Isle Royale National Park with my partner. It sleeted on us and thunder stormed so violently I was worried we'd be crushed by falling trees: the tent was undamaged and bone dry.

The Halfdome features a double door entrance and is perfect for two people looking to share a tent. The weight runs at almost 5 pounds. If backpacking with a partner, can be divided to almost 2.5 pounds per person, a very reasonable weight for a beginner level 2-3 night backpacking trip. The vestibule space is adequate, and for the price (\$360) you cannot beat the quality.

Make sure you watch the setup video online before taking the tent out! A lot of the negative reviews of this tent seem to be due to getting wet at night due to improper setup. When setting up your tent, try to choose a flat spot where it does not appear water naturally runs through in a rainstorm. Even the best tent will be washed out if the ground turns into a river.

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More to consider on the [REI Half Dome 2+](#):

Some dew on the inside of the rainfly is to be expected every morning when camping—this is condensation from your breathing, not the tent leaking! Properly staking out your tent to keep the rainfly separate from the bug net will reduce discomfort due to condensation.

One thing to note with any REI brand product is that they **DO NOT offer a lifetime warranty**, whereas almost every other brand listed here does, and will completely replace your product if broken even years after the fact. Particularly with newer REI products, I have anecdotally noticed that they seem less structurally sturdy than their (Nemo, Big Agnes) counterparts. I think that REI products can be hit or miss. Personally, if I were looking for a jack-of-all trades tent to get into the outdoors a little

more seriously, the half dome would still be my first purchase– you can get a lot of milage out of this one tent.

All in all, the [REI halfdome 2+](#) is easily the best all-around tent on the market for beginner campers looking to car camp, backpack, and more.

pros: easy setup, warm, double doors, great value for price

cons: heavy for one person use, REI's warranty policy vs quality of product compared to a more expensive brand

2) [MSR Hubba Hubba 2](#): Best all around tent

The [MSR Hubba Hubba 2](#) is more expensive than the Half Dome, but at just 3 lbs 4oz packed weight total perhaps well worth the splurge with excellent reviews across the board. In general, the MSR Hubba Hubba is regarded as one of the best backpacking tents on the market for couples or small groups.

MSR has a reputation for superior longevity of gear verses the REI branded products, plus a more comprehensive warranty policy. The Hubba Hubba makes for a great backpacking tent for adventurers looking for a high quality tent with longevity.

On our [70-day British Columbia sea kayaking expedition](#), Andy and I used an [MSR Remote 3](#), the mountaineering version of the Hubba Hubba tent. It's significantly more expensive, but for living in all weather for over two months straight this tent was absolutely worth it. I would recommend the Remote 3 pretty much exclusively for winter camping or expedition style trips.

pros: easy setup, warm, double doors, lightweight

cons: price [\$550]

3) [Big Agnes Fly Creek HV UL 2](#): Best Lightweight Backpacking tent

The [Big Agnes Fly Creek HV UL 2](#) is *the* best backpacking tent on the market. I've owned this tent for seven years and subjected it to *heavy heavy* use. It's survived five seasons of overnight kayak guiding both in the Apostle Islands and in the San Juan Islands. It's been backpacking in Armenia and on the Border Route Trail, and been my home for a 3-week expedition paddle of the Apostle Islands. I've mostly used it solo, but I've shared it on a few occasions, more successfully with another small woman than with my taller partner, but it can be done in a pinch.

After this most recent season of overnight kayak guiding (year seven of beating this tent up) the shock cord is losing a little tension, but not so much that it's unusable. This tent is perfect for backpacking, and my only hesitation in using it for sea kayak camping is that it is not freestanding and needs to be staked out for a successful night.

When setup fully, this tent can weather storms that take out neighboring trees and hail (I unfortunately know from experience). I've also used it in the snow.

At \$400-\$450, this tent is medium pricey, but at 2 pounds a really solid choice for any solo backpacker or paddler looking for a long term tent setup.

pros: easy setup, warm, durable, lightweight, good price for value

cons: not free-standing, space might not be adequate for taller folks

4) [Nemo Dragonfly 2](#): Most Versatile Camping Tent

At \$500, the [Nemo Dragonfly 2](#) is more expensive than the Fly Creek, slightly heavier, but freestanding and with more livable space. Double door exits allow for increased comfort, and the Dragonfly is freestanding, but functionally the Dragonfly is an extremely similar tent to the Fly Creek.

I would say the Fly Creek makes more sense for someone looking primarily for a small lightweight tent to use solo, while the Dragonfly makes more sense for someone looking for more comfort at camp and the ability to comfortably share the tent with a second person.

pros: easy setup, warm, durable, double doors, freestanding

cons: lighter-weight options on the market, but honestly this tent is just a solid choice

5) [Eureka Midori 2/3](#): Budget Versatile Car Camping Tent

The Eureka Midori comes in a [one person](#), [two person](#), and [three person](#) model, with the larger of the two weighing in at six pounds and cost running \$230 USD. (Compare to the two person, weighing just over five pounds packed and costing \$200). The Midori is an excellent budget tent with a double door entrance and freestanding setup.

The mission of the Midori tent is to provide both an easy setup and a lot of space, and this tent definitely achieves that. I purchased the three person this summer for car camping. I was hoping it would make a good tent for 2-3 person backpacking trips, overnight sea kayaking trips, *and* car camping. I always hate leaving a more expensive expedition tent set up as a basecamp at a campground.

For my purposes, the Midori three proved a little comically large for my sister and I, but I think this tent would be perfect for a couple on a budget looking for a solid tent to start car camping with, and use on short backpacking or canoe camping trips. I also personally like the value in saved packing space over roomy tents— I'm short and small, and paddle a smaller sea kayak without a ton of room to spare, and prefer a barebones camp setup.

pros: easy setup, double doors, freestanding, affordable

cons: heavier than more expensive options

6) [Kelty Late Start 2](#): Best Budget Backpacking Tent

Looking for the best cheap backpacking tent? The [Kelty Late Start 2](#) comes in at just over 4 pounds packed weight, at just \$160, making it easily the best budget backpacking tent on the market. The Late Start is single door entry, free standing, and extremely hardy– we use these tents for guests at the outfitter I guide overnight sea kayaking trips at, and there is no better way to test the longevity of a tent than letting inexperienced strangers use them every day of the summer. Happy to report they've held up great!

[The Late Start 2](#) can function as a roomy solo hiker/paddler tent, but is still a genuinely comfortable night for two people (definitely more-so than the Fly Creek!). The Late Start is extremely easy to set up and tear down and freestanding. For a true solo budget backpacker, the [Late Start 1](#) rings in at \$130 and 3.5 pounds making the Kelty Late Start line the best budget-friendly backpacking tent.

pros: easy setup, durable freestanding, affordable

cons: heavier than more expensive options, single doors

7) [REI Wonderland 6](#): Best Car Camping & Basecamp Tent

Looking for the best car camping tent for long trips? Looking no further than the [REI Wonderland 6](#), which might be the best car camping tent to live inside, which I know because I did this summer! From May to September, my partner and I lived inside an REI Wonderland 6 with the [mudroom attachment](#) when we were not actively guiding overnight sea kayaking trips (and thus living in different tents). You can read about my experiences with [#tentlife here](#).

The [REI Wonderland 6](#) is awesome. You could easily fit two side by side queen air mattresses inside, or in our case, one mattress and stacked storage bins. The ceiling is tall and zip-able vent windows allow for substantial airflow. Add the mudroom attachment to the tent for a covered outdoor living space– here we put camp chairs and a table next to stacked locking bins to make up a kitchen. During our several months camping, it down poured on us several times, once or twice with high winds and hail. The Wonderland 6 stayed completely livable, bone dry, and barely moved in the biggest gusts.

The REI Wonderland 6 is the best car camping tent for long term camping. It takes a little bit of time and effort to set up, but for camping stays longer than a week it is totally worth it– for anything shorter the Wonderland is almost definitely overkill. Also worth considering is the [REI Wonderland 4](#), slightly smaller, or the intense (...in tents...) [Wonderland X](#), which would be great for living out of or field work.

pros: tall, excellent weatherproofing, extremely spacious

cons: involved setup, might literally be too big for some campgrounds, many other reviews complain of y-pole defects

Normally I don't give negative reviews too much thought on outdoor gear (often times it appears to be user errors) but many purchasers have complained about the poles snapping on this tent. While our tent held up fantastically for literally five months of continuous use, when tearing down we did notice one of the poles had bent. At the time I wrote this we had five months of continuous use on the tent, but it's worth noting a potential defect like that.

Additionally, if I find myself looking to live in a tent for a summer again, I'll definitely be investing in a canvas wall tent with a wood burning stove or a [bell tent](#) setup. The canvas breathes better than nylon and feels more like a home. **2025 EDIT: JK lived in a canvas wall tent last summer and the REI Wonderland was INFINITELY a better experience. Better temperature regulation and more critter proof. Those zip off windows are a lifesaver.**

8) Hennessey Hammock Expedition: Best Lightweight Budget Sleep System

Not looking for a tent at all? Hammock camping has gained popularity anywhere there are trees to hang from! Pros of hammock camping include larger variety of "tent pads" available, potential to be the driest set up, and with practice with your setup, increased comfort.

The [Hennessey Hammock Expedition](#) is tested and true, and at just over two pounds and \$160, a hammock setup can be the cheapest ultralight sleep system on the market.

Overall, the best tent for you depends on your needs. Someone looking to solo backpack primarily is going to want a different tent than someone primarily looking to car camp.

By Maddy Marquardt