Article Side

Cottage Living, unique ways to maximize on space and money while travelling by Alexis Gibson

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Space is the biggest challenge everywhere. And when you are a large group or family, trying to minimise gas consumption, you consolidate to one or two vehicles. RIGHT? Well, it makes it hard to pack all the things and groceries you would like to take with you for your weekend or weeks away. Yes, there is the option of shopping locally when you have arrived, but seriously, most would just prefer to get it all done in advance, and sit and relax by the waterâ€™s edge for the rest of the time. Letâ€™s face it, vacations go by so fast, youâ€™d rather spend it resting and not standing in line-ups at the local Wal-Mart or Super Centre, or at the Timâ€™s Drive Thru waiting for your coffee, because you forgot to pack coffee.

Letâ€™s not forget about the cost of groceries. When you are out of your element and travelling, groceries always seem to be much higher in cost in tourist bound locales. That can of chicken broth, would be $.89cents at your local market in your neighborhood, but in this town, itâ€™s almost $3.00. Youâ€™re captive and have no choice. You need it for your rice and noodles.

Space and cost challenges are one of the most frustrating aspects in enjoying a cottage vacation. In this article we will help you plan accordingly in advance of your departure to maximize your space issues in the car and even in the dwelling, while sticking to your budget for the majority of the week.

ASK WHAT TO EXPECT in the kitchen for coffee, tea, sugar, condiments, spices, etc. Most cottages do not provide any extras. Do not assume you are going to a resort style hotel with a kitchen that will give you some basic essentials. With the exception of tools and plates, it is best if you ask specific questions for things that you will need and may forget to bring. This is definitely VERY IMPORTANT. For example, Coffee Filters. If the coffee maker needs filters and there arenâ€™t any, guess what? No coffee and youâ€™re off to the local store. Paper towels are another good example; always bring at least one package of a good quality paper towel for the week. ASK, ASK, AND ASK.

PLAN AHEAD, as a working mom; I always created a meal plan for our weekends up north, or weeks away up north at the cottage. 3-5 choices for breakfasts: cereal, eggs, fruit and oatmeal, homemade pancakes, BLTâ€™s; lunches: subs and sandwiches, burgers, sausages, and the occasional shore lunch (fish it out of the lake, mom would clean it and filet it, dad would grill it or quick pan fry over the fire) supper: proteins on the grill, pasta, or stir fry. Whatever your choice on meals for your family, make a plan for the time away, actually plot it out for the week. That way you will have a good idea of what you need to shop for in advance, how much of it, and how you are going to store it in the coolers on the way up.

LESS IS MORE when it comes to plastic containers, they take up a lot more room in the cooler, and you have more recycling at the end of the week; Ziplocs are the best for storage whenever possible. They can be washed and reused, cost a lot less when compared to Tupperware, and you can freeze them to minimize the space consumption over all. That goes for things like pop bottles and pop cans as well. Paper boxes can be burned in the fire pit, and yes they take up room, but they can also be crushed and flattened out and taken to the recycling depot. Plastic is a pain to the environment.

MEASURE AND PORTION AS OFTEN AS YOU CAN, on everything! For example, if you are coffee or tea drinkers, count out in a Ziploc the amount of tea and coffee you will need. The same goes for sugar or sweeteners, and any other easy to measure items like dog food. The more you organise and measure, the less you will need to shop for and the more precise you will be in your weekâ€™s

grocery and toiletry needs. If you go through 2 rolls per day of toilet paper, pack 3 per day to be safe. And remember: DO NOT BUY THE THICK KIND OF TP---VERY BAD FOR SEPTICS.

ANTICIPATE THE ESSENTIALS for shopping. Things like milk, eggs, and drinking water, more than likely will need to be replaced before your week is up (maybe not, but possibly). Pack enough of these perishables for 3 days. And on the day you plan to either take tour, eat out for the one evening, or visit family or friends, create your â€œshortâ€• list and again, shop accordingly to last you until your arrival back home. Again, it keeps you organised, and in the event you need something for the house when you get home at 10 pm, youâ€™re not running to the store right away, and will have time to unload first before the rat race starts again on Monday.

DONâ€™T WASTE THE LEFTOVERS! TRY NEW IDEAS FOR RECIPES over the fire, and on the grill. Donâ€™t be afraid to experiment with everyday things foods you normally would do over the stove top and then throw out. Maybe grilling your vegetables instead of boiling them will minimize your water use and dishwashing needs, and you try something a little different. The leftover pork chops you didnâ€™t finish at supper, when all chopped up, would make a great pork hash over a skillet in the morning with some onions and chopped potatoes on the side of your scrambled eggs. Just because it wasnâ€™t eaten the first time, does not mean it cannot be used in another meal. Leftover grilled veggies are a great insert to any good sandwich or wrap.

ALWAYS REMEMBER A SMALL EMERGENCY KIT; again do not assume there will be one and it will be full of Band-Aids or Polysporin; always create your own small kit of basic essentials for the odd scrape, cut or hornet sting. Chances are you wonâ€™t need to use it, but itâ€™s a very â€œnice to ha you do. It should also include some â€œafter biteâ€•, Polysporin, Tylenol, Thermometer, Calamine tube, Gravol strip, Band-Aids, Cheese Cloth Stripsâ€¦for some ideas.

CLOTHESâ€¦.do not over pack. Remember, you may not have access to laundry facilities, or may you will. Either way, you should pack what you will actually need and use. So make a clothes plan for the kids, so they are not bringing everything in their closet, just the essentials. One nice shirt or dress for a dinner out is appropriate, but if itâ€™s summer, you probably wonâ€™t need the winter coats. One sweater with a hood is always recommended for bug season. I even recommend shopping for bug jackets. THEY DO WORK. I have at least a dozen, and they take up very little room when compressed into their pouches and they are breathable, and not very expensive. If you are by the water, the kids are going to spend a lot of time swimming, chances are, they are not going to need 5 pairs of shorts, and 5 pairs of underwear.

PAY ATTENTION DURING THE DRIVE UP, as you may find some easy access points to locally grown fruits and vegetables, fire wood, and a propane swap. This way you can pull over and stretch your legs, and at the same time may be buy a bit of firewood for the first night, note the tank is empty on the existing BBQ that comes with the dwelling and can scoot over and do a quick swap before supper time. A great many local growers in cottage country will have signs posted for farm fresh eggs, home-made pies, fresh corn on the cobâ€¦.you get the idea. If you remember to ask, the owner will be able to tell you where you can go to get some of the bulky items like firewood. Most will not provide unlimited wood for the week.

DRINKING WATER IS IMPORTANT, pack enough for at least 3 days. One large jug that sits on a water cooler is enough for my family, (7, 2 adults and 5 kids under 16) for about 3 days. We usually bring one, and will refill when we go to town at least once during the week. If we have room in the van we may bring 2 jugs. But usually there isnâ€™t enough room. There are many towns in Ontario that offer FREE drinking water, provided you have a container to take it away in. Again, ask the owner where it is, and you can take advantage of the offering. Many rentals in the north pump water from the lake, and the well water is not always a guarantee of drinking quality. In any event, should you have the need to use lake water for basic cooking i.e. potatoes, eggs, corn; the rule of thumb is boil it for at least 20 minutes before using and you should be fine.

You can find your perfect cottage rental at Cottageme.com. The key message in this article is planning ahead. If you leave everything to the last minute, chances are you have not put enough

time and effort into your vacation plan. Being organized can still be fun, and scheduling the fun can be the better and safer way to enjoy yourself, and keep the entire family happy, and satisfied. Have a great and safe vacation in cottage rental country!!!

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Articles writer for vacation rental site CottageMe.com that advertises vacation rental properties - cottages, condos, vacation rental homes, villas, cabins and B&B from Owners and Management companies. They offers the ultimate variety in a cottage rental and vacation home rentals from Canada, USA, Mexico and Caribbean. These areas include the popular Collingwood, Muskoka, Haliburton, Kawartha, Northern Ontario, Laurentides, Mont Tremblant, Florida, Orlando regions. This site is not a broker - for inquiries on a rent cottage or homes travelers need to contact directly the individual owners or managers either by phone or by email. Web site's goal is to help you find the best vacation place to meet your demanding needs completely free.

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