

# the ultimate guide to

camping options:

## SLEEPING WITH YOUR HORSES: FROM PUP TENT TO PALACE

by WENDY LUMBERT

**Usually horse-camping progresses in stages. The first stage often consists of you and your friends taking off for a weekend with the horses, sleeping in tents and having a blast around the campfire. Sometimes this phase goes on for years. For many of us it ends with one unexpected drenching rain or snowstorm too many, and we feel ready to move on.**

The next stage may be as simple as just moving inside the horse trailer dressing room or extra stall, or perhaps into a simple gooseneck with a sleeping bag and dry space to change. The final stage? Ah. Living Quarters luxury... heaters, AC, refrigerator, shower, plasma TV? Here's a look

at all of them, from simple to the simply unbelievable.

Let's start out in the most basic way – tent camping. A good tent and especially a great pad to sleep on can make all the difference. You can buy pump-up air mattresses that are really comfortable, but be sure to bring the pump with you. Get one that doesn't take all day to get the air out of. Or buy big foam pads that fold up. Your tent should be roomy enough to stick all your clothes in there and if you have a nice saddle you might want to put it in there too. Remember, don't keep food in your tent!

Tent shopping is fun as there is quite a variety. Get one with good solid poles that won't break in a stiff wind. Look for an extremely waterproof tent with lots of venting and a window to catch a cross-breeze. Ease of set-up and breakdown is really a nice feature.

Speaking from experience, anytime I am sleeping in a tent on the ground, I want my horses in portable corrals. There is nothing scarier than a horse or herd of them running through camp when you are sleeping in a paper-thin tent. Overall, corrals tend to be the most secure method of confinement for those 1,000 pound friends you take with you. Hi-ties on your trailer probably run a close second.

If you want more security than sleeping in a frail little tent then

consider getting the kind that goes in your pickup bed. You can even drive around with them on the bed. You'll be up off the ground and secure in the bed of your truck, as long as you don't mind crawling over the tailgate.

Or, you can just move into the horse trailer. If you sweep the back out when you get to camp, then tarp it, you can put up a cot, hang a towel over the windows, and it's home sweet home. If you're going to go this route, then use lots of shavings on the trip there – it makes it easier to convert your horse's bathroom to your bedroom.

The next practical step up is to sleep in a gooseneck trailer. If you don't have the money yet for a living quarters you can still get a good night's sleep in a gooseneck for a decent price. You'll be tucked away safely in an enclosure with hard sides, and you can sit and read without mosquitoes buzzing you. If you live someplace cold you'll probably want to insulate it, and add an RV catalytic heater. Don't ever use a propane stove or outside heater inside your trailer, it can kill you. Always buy a heater that is made specifically for RVs.

You'll find that a simple gooseneck trailer can be outfitted nicely for a camping getaway. There is lots of room to store tack, water, food and clothes someplace they are guaranteed to be dry and safe; just turn the key in the lock and leave for the day. There is the benefit of being able to upgrade them as you go along if you are handy – many folks add kitchens and bathrooms over the years; just start out with a little extra room in the gooseneck. A screened camper door is a must-have for a pleasant breeze inside, and if you add an extra window on the other side you'll get a great cross-draft. A fan in the vent will do the same thing.

If you want to sleep inside with a bit more luxury, but don't want to pull a gooseneck, or if your truck isn't heavy duty enough to pull one, you might consider a cabover or pop-up camper. A pop-up camper that fits in your truck bed generally weighs less than a cabover. Cabover campers are usually quite heavy, and it's important to know what your

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# HORSE CAMPING

truck can safely handle before you buy a big camper and then pull your horse trailer as well. This is something you'll want to check out thoroughly, as pulling too big a load can blow your engine and be extremely unsafe as well.

If you have a truck that can handle the weight, having a nice cabover camper can be extremely comfortable. Nothing beats eating ice cream after a long hot trail ride and, if you set up your camper right, you can keep your fridge and freezer powered up to keep your treats cold. Ice cream and frosty beverages both! You'll be able to cook inside, away from bugs, and sleep in a comfy bed at night. If you get a shower and commode you'll have all the comforts of home! Campers can be found from budget pop-ups to extremely expensive high end luxury models.

Another way to horsecamp that is a bit less like camping is to pull your trailer with a motorhome. There are many models available that have the horsepower to pull your trailer. They can be found from small to bus size, complete with power glide rooms that pop out and give you as much space as a condo. If you haven't gone out looking at these, do it sometime even if just for the fun of it. There are usually RV expos at most big fairgrounds once or twice a year where you can go kick the tires on these things while having a comdog and a soft drink. They are just amazing! If nothing else, you might get some great ideas for your fixing-up-the-horse-trailer project. And, if it's in your budget, you'll find you can buy something that is essentially like a second home. You can go camping and be on the internet, use a washer and dryer, make a salad and grilled salmon, and get a great night's sleep listening to your 6-speaker stereo with CD player.

Motorhomes and campers have the benefit of being great for family vacations. If you like to take trips with the whole family and not take the horses along, then this may be a great option for you. Camping does not always mean horsecamping, right? (Such a strange concept!) Remember, they come in

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# the ultimate guide to

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all price ranges, so don't be put off by all this talk of crazy nice luxury.

It's a toss-up between wonderful and fabulous when you compare really nice motor homes and campers vs. living quarter horse trailers. You can find gooseneck horse trailers that are so nice you could live in them year-round. They come equipped with everything you could possibly need, including plasma tvs, oven, full sized refrigerator/freezer, spacious sleeping compartments, frosty AC and lots, lots more. You can buy gooseneck trailers that have two or more glides, or pop-outs, so that you actually have living rooms and big bedrooms. You can bake lasagna for dinner, turn up the outside speakers, and have a margarita under the awning in the heat of the afternoon. You can even add a second awning so your horse can relax in the shade as well!

One thing to consider when you are trying to decide between horse trailer with living quarters vs. camper, is what you do when you get to camp. Do you unhook your trailer from the truck and drive around? Would you want to do that with a big cabover camper on the back of your pickup? Because it definitely will be going everywhere you go unless you unload it in camp. With a gooseneck you just drive out from under it and you are free to go offroading and 4-wheeling with just your dog in the bed of the truck.

That is also a consideration between goosenecks and bumper-pull trailers. If you like to camp where parking is extremely tight, you'll find that a gooseneck is a lot easier to jockey into a challenging corner. You can turn your pickup at right angles to it and be able to stay hooked up to power, which means lights and other amenities. If you want to leave your horse tied to the trailer and drive around in the truck, it's a lot safer to do so with a gooseneck than a bumper pull. A fair-sized horse can actually pull a bumper pull trailer around; it's never advisable to tie them to one unless the truck is hooked up to it as well.

There are limitless options for setting up camp, including just lying under the stars in your sleeping bag next to a campfire. Whether you love "roughing it" or if your idea of camping out includes enchiladas in the oven and fancy lights by the bed, there are ways to make it happen. Happy camping! **TB**



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