

Camping in Style

By ReadWorks

Vivien dropped the big cardboard box she had been carrying for the past five minutes and let out a huge groan. She stretched her arms high above her head, then folded herself over to touch the ground. Her back ached, her shoulders were sore, and small scrapes and bug bites covered her legs. But she could not have been happier. She looked up at the sky, struggling to locate a single cloud. She closed her eyes and listened to the wind rustling the leaves of the canopy of trees above her. She smiled at the sound of the crickets. “Okay, back to work,” she thought. She opened her eyes, entered the tent with the box, and got set to unpack it.

All of a sudden, someone pushed back the flap of the tent. “Hey there!” he said. “Oh hey, Kyle, I didn’t hear you coming,” Vivien replied, startled by his entrance. “Do you need any help?” he asked while walking toward the center of the tent to be able to stand completely upright. “Sure, why not?” Vivien said. The two of them began to pull out long wooden boards from the large cardboard box, then finally an instruction manual. “This might be a little more difficult than I expected,” Kyle said with a worried look, while reading the booklet.

The two were standing in a tent, but this was no ordinary tent. The wooden platform that housed the structure was 16’ x 20’—enough room to hold a bed, a futon, a desk, and a few chairs. It even had a porch on the back, where two rocking chairs sat, so guests could enjoy the view of the forest. The large canvas tent was safari-style, meaning that the top of the structure resembled a triangle, with the roof converging at a point. Long wooden poles held the tent in place. It was just one of eight tents that stood on the new campground that Kyle had founded just months before.

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A year prior to building the tents, Kyle was on a camping trip with a few of his friends. Only three had accompanied him on the trek, since he planned to hike a famously long trail, pitching a small tent along the way only for sleeping purposes. It was certainly a test of endurance and one’s ability to live in nature. When he first told his friends about his idea, not many wanted to join him on the journey, hesitant to relinquish the comforts of home, running water, and electricity. Although he enjoyed every second of his camping trip, he found himself wishing that his other friends could have come with him. That’s when he first got the idea for the campground.

“Why not start a luxury campground?” he asked one of his best friends and a classmate of his in business school, Lucy. “You mean like glamping?” she asked. They had briefly heard about the “glamping” movement in one of their classes—it was a new business model that merged camping with luxury hospitality to create an outdoor experience for those who didn’t want to sleep on the ground, get dirty, or be on their own in nature.

“People like to camp, but the notion of being alone in the forest with only a small tent and some cooking supplies can feel uncomfortable for some,” Kyle said. “A luxury campsite would solve all those problems!”

So the two of them started to draft a business proposal. Kyle had never really pictured himself as an entrepreneur—his father was in the financial industry, and he thought he would follow in his footsteps and work at a financial firm one day. But his passion for the campsite grew each day, and he knew he would regret it if he didn’t give it a chance. So with the help of Lucy, he outlined his plans to build eight tents behind a well-known hotel in their town, one that was located on land that used to be a farm, with a beautiful state park behind the property. They would be able to use the hotel’s kitchen to provide food to their guests, and share the hotel’s amenities, such as the gym and the spa. Each tent would feature nearly everything you could find in a hotel room, except for electricity and running water. But well-equipped bathrooms would be located less than a minute’s walk from the tents, and charging stations would be available in the large lobby tent, where guests would check in. There were a few obstacles in the planning process, but for the most part, Kyle and Lucy were very happy with their completed idea.

Then came the permits. The two business partners had to receive various building permits, occupancy permits, and build their tents according to state and fire codes. It was a complicated process, and each time they thought they were forging ahead, an inspector paid a visit to their site and told them about yet another rule that they had to abide by. Even though they did not build too far into the forest, they had to construct a road down from the hotel so that fire trucks could easily access the site in case of a fire. There were many requirements like this one, but Kyle and Lucy tackled each with simple, practical, and cost-efficient solutions. They didn’t let any of this deter them—although they grew frustrated, they just had to push back their opening date by a few weeks to get everything settled.

To be able to finish everything on time, they hired a few helpers, like Vivien. Viv, as she was lovingly called, was to be their camp host, and would help guests with anything they might need during their stay. But until the site opened, she pitched in with various tasks, like assembling furniture. She loved the work; she enjoyed watching it all come together, and solving problems as they presented themselves. So as she stood with Kyle, reading the instruction booklet, she was extremely content.

Step by step, they assembled the king-size bed and pushed it against one of the canvas walls. They lugged the mattress into the tent with help from a few other employees, and placed it on the frame. Once everything was finished, Viv jumped onto the bed and spread out her limbs. “This is so comfortable!” she exclaimed. “Now this is camping in style.”