



For me, there is nothing that inspires freedom more than throwing a tent in the car, heading across the channel and driving into the unknown. I believe that with good equipment (sturdy spacious tent a must!) you can banish damp childhood memories of family camping trips, forever! However, if you're either not comfortable with the thought of finding accommodation as you go or indeed a blow-up bed just doesn't cut it, you might want to consider Eurocamp.

Eurocamp offers a wide selection of family camping holidays on parcs and apartment resorts throughout Europe and the USA, with a range of activities and age-specific kids' clubs. Plus, there's a fantastic choice of accommodation, including mobile homes, chalets, bungalows, and fully equipped 'Classic' and 'Safari' tents so you can expect the freedom of the outdoor camping lifestyle, without the hassle. Now although you could never steer me permanently away from venturing into the unknown, in my role as family travel columnist I was asked to try out a Eurocamp holiday, so in May I packed my husband, three-year-old daughter and our dog into the car with our booking... and an Outwell tent, one-ring stove and European map so that we could turn five nights into 14 and satisfy our free-spirited needs along the way. In two weeks we racked up miles in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, and there was something on offer for all four of us.

Three nights camping in Bruges satisfied the adult's city-break needs, although both my daughter and dog seemed more than happy with the homemade waffles and ice-cream on offer! Before we knew it, it was time to head to Eurocamp's Beekse Bergen, in Hilvarenbeek, Holland for a stay in one of their classic mobile homes. With its manmade beaches, bicycle hire, restaurant, fabulous kids swimming pool, as well as a safari park and outdoor adventure park for kids (I might add that the bumper boats are great for adults too!) right next door – and free to guests – these five days of the holiday were certainly a high-point for both our dog and our daughter and a great way for us to spend quality active time together in the great outdoors.

We completed our camping trip with 3 nights in Germany before heading to a rather luxurious campsite in France. The weather was more than kind for May, which always makes being out in the open a thrill, and the variety of our two-week trip meant that nobody in the family was left bored!

Alice spent 5 nights at Eurocamp's Beekse Bergen, in Hilvarenbeek, Holland. A seven night break arriving 27 August 2010, staying in a 2 bed 'Classic' mobile home, costs just £650 for the whole family, accommodation only (but with unlimited FREE entry to the Safari Park and various other children's attractions). Ferry crossings, fly-drive packages or rail travel can be arranged through Eurocamp at a supplement.
Tel: 0844 406 0552
www.eurocamp.co.uk

A good, warm sleeping bag is essential for comfortable camping, not least for children. My daughter was snug as a bug in her AYACUCHO SKY 250 JUNIOR sleeping bag. The mummy design aids efficiency in colder weather and the long side zip adds versatility when the temperature increases. AYACUCHO SKY 250 JUNIOR sleeping bag
Price: £25.00
Product Code: 82710013 (460257)
Tel: 0844 557 7755
www.cotswoldoutdoor.com



Travel Sense

Alice Griffin makes sense of how camping isn't what it used to be...

If you're going to camp you need is a sturdy spacious tent. On this trip we used an Outwell tent from their NEW Magic Range. My daughter was delighted with the colourful Kids Room, not to mention the outdoor game wall, and for a large tent it was surprisingly quick and easy to erect, and pack down. With a large living space and two bedrooms, it was pure camping luxury and I noted many an admiring glance from fellow campers squished into rather smaller affairs!

Outwell Magic Three room tunnel tent

Price: £399.99

Sleeps: 5 people

www.outwell.co.uk



Eastbourne Holiday Campers

If you want to go on the road in true style you could hire the 'Dolly' VW Camper Van from Eastbourne Holiday Campers. Dolly is a 21st Century girl with a 1970's aura, and can accommodate four passengers with a double bed plus a roof bed (ideal for children). Dolly is available for week-long jaunts in either England or Europe and comes complete with everything you need for a road-trip holiday. For me this has to be the funkiest way to travel!

Price: £695 for one week until end of August, £560 from 4 September onwards
Tel: 01323 639 309
www.eastbournevwcamperhire.co.uk



Organic Sun Lotion

Green People's award-winning range of organic sun care for children offers high levels of sun protection without the need for synthetic chemicals. With children's skin having greater sensitivity to sunlight, this organic range means that kids can still have fun in the sun whilst their delicate and sensitive skin is protected. I particularly love the Lavender Children's Sun Lotion – it absorbs quickly with no mess and smells divine!

Price: £14.75/150ml
www.greenpeople.co.uk



Childcare First Aid Kit

It's always advisable to have a first aid kit on board when you're going it alone on a road/camping trip. The Childcare First Aid Kit from First Response Supplies is an approved emergency first aid kit and contains all your child needs for a happy and healthy summer holiday.

First Response Supplies
Childcare First Aid Kit
Price: £16.17
www.firstresponsesupplies.co.uk



Still not sold on the whole camping idea?

Why not try...

Pagel- Imaginative play on holiday in a Special Place for families

Established eight years ago with the dream of creating a special place for families with young babies and children to holiday, Pagel is not only outstanding in its beauty, but is also set up so that parents with young babies and children have all they need to holiday and have fun. As well as the availability of all the standard parenting equipment (from baby monitors to sterilisers), Pagel offers a "Play environment for Imaginative Play", featuring three acres of land with play zones, play barns full of toys, dress up clothes and arts and crafts, in addition to sandpits, pools and so much more!

To learn more or to book your holiday visit:
www.pagel-france.com

Morrck Baby Hoodie

If you're planning a varied camping trip like mine with a fair amount of driving, you will want to make sure your little one is comfortable and I think the wonderful 'All Season' travel wrap from Morrck is just the ticket. Made from an outer fleece layer and inner cotton jersey layer, it fits into any car seat or buggy and is available in over 20 colours. To make your Hoodie even more original you can have it embroidered with your baby's name, or opt for a bespoke option.

All Season Travel Wrap
Price: £32.95
Sizes: 0-6 months, 4-18 months and 18 months to four years
www.morrck.com



Speekee Spanish

"Immerse children in a second language when they're young, and they'll find it as easy as 'uno, dos, tres' for life." That's the message from the creators of Speekee, a wonderful language course for children aged two to nine. My daughter loves these DVDs, which even have me singing along! And I think this is a fun way to introduce a second language at a young age. So if you're thinking of driving to a Spanish campsite then a few watches of these DVDs, which show Spanish children in real-life situations, will ensure your children have plenty of friends at the beach.

Speekee Spanish Language Programme
(3 hours of easy Spanish learning plus CD of all songs)
Price: £95
Tel: 01422 820263
www.speekee.co.uk

