

Family camping on the Gatineau River

Saturday, 03 July 2010 19:00

Aline and I have been wanting to give the kids their first taste of camping this summer so with good weather forecasts on the horizon and a lower than normal bug season thus far, we chose this Canada Day long weekend to go camping near her parent's cabin on the Gatineau River.



Suppertime! JG and I scouted out a nearly ideal campsite a short 15 minute paddle away from the dock on a secluded island and after claiming it for ourselves with a tent, Aline and I returned with the kids in tow later that afternoon.

Hazel immediately set about tossing sticks in the water and Sam copied her while Aline and I set up camp. The tent site was lumpy and we had no sunset view but otherwise the site was perfect. A shallow wading area for kids. Decent rock ledge to sit on. Trees for our hammock. A cool breeze and virtually no bothersome bugs.

Not having a bathroom didn't faze the kids. Sam discovered leaning over the hammock gave

him a good position for an easy to clean number two. Hazel found great glee in counting the ants who invaded her potty after a pee.

Sam was ravenous and foraged through our cooler for snacks while we prepared corn followed by cheese and macaroni for dinner testing out our new wood burning Vital Stove for the first time. Eager to see it in action, I nearly caused a forest fire as pine needles caught fire outside the stove forcing us to hastily beat the flames back. It was an impressive display of heat caused by a small battery powered fan which fed the flames in the stove and pretty much incinerated any dry material you gave it.

Aline's folks paddled over to join us for a smores dessert which Sam smeared all over his face. He was easy to clean and the kids then played pretend canoe before Hazel waded into the water searching for clam shells with JG. [canoe/2010_gatineau{/gallery}](#) Bedtime came with sundown. Aline stood by the water rocking Sam to sleep while I told Hazel some of her favourite bedtime stories doing my best not to forget the storylines ? unsuccessfully. With Sam successfully asleep, Aline took over and retold Hazel the story of our day leading up to bedtime.

What happens next? Hazel asked. You go to sleep! Aline replied.

It took a little doing but she finally nodded off around 9PM as shadows began to flicker as the sun set over the horizon.

Aline slept with the kids that night and I slept in the hammock.

At least we tried to sleep.

Light laughter echoed across the waters. At 10PM a motorboat from a nearby island raggedly headed for the boat launch with its carousing passengers. Another campsite decided to howl like wolves for 10 minutes. And without doubt, one of the cottagers was having a party as strains of Pink Floyd danced across the waters till well after midnight. But there were other more soothing sounds as well: croaking bullfrogs, the cry of a loon and sadly, even a few pesky buzzing mosquitoes that wanted to join me in the hammock. Hazel woke at 4AM complaining of a runny nose. I have snot she told mom. Wearily Aline wiped it onto her own pants and tried to snatch a few more minutes of sleep before morning light dawned at 5AM when we all rose to greet the day.

Sam was ravenous again and started in on the cooler and we munched on oranges, cranberries, nuts and pepperettes for breakfast. We hadn't planned on a hot breakfast but Dianne and JG arrived with eggs, bacon and coffee around 9AM so we fired up the stove and had a second breakfast together. The kids had more fun tossing rocks, twigs and shells in the water and Hazel ventured in again naming a nearby crocodile-shaped rock Rooky Rook and decided that a visiting duck would be called Leeny.

Meanwhile, Sam got carried away with the twig tossing and dropped our camp shovel off a rock ledge which Aline rescued in order to dig up some blueberry bushes for replanting in our garden.

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Before the sun got too hot, we packed up and gently coaxed Hazel to say goodbye as it was time to go. She didn't want to leave and neither Aline or I blamed her. We were happy they had enjoyed the experience.