



*Image courtesy of CanaDream.*

# I Had Never Gone RV Camping. The Pandemic Was the Perfect Time to Try It

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STORY: *Robin Perelle*

I wake up in the middle of the night to the patter of rain on the roof, but I'm pleased to find myself warm and cozy.

My relationship with camping has always been complicated. I relish those first deep breaths of clean air in the morning, the sounds of wildlife, the crackling of campfires. I am less fond of the messier and more uncomfortable sides of nature: the inability to get fully clean, the hard ground beneath my back, the cold nights and clammy tent walls, not to mention outhouses and the dreaded spectre of rain.

As Vancouver Island's skies drip steadily on the roof of our rented RV, I think, this is the answer to camping I've been searching for all along.



Our truck sits nestled in the tall trees of a provincial park just steps from the shore of Horne Lake, fresh air at my fingertips, while inside the camper I'm dry and toasty, nestled in a bed as comfortable as the one I left behind for this nomadic experiment.



*Horne Lake Provincial Park. Photo by Robin Perelle.*

I've always wanted to try RVing, and this moment in time seems particularly apt. In the midst of a global pandemic, what better way to safely seek out B.C.'s abundant nature than with my own home safely on my back, its facilities clean and contained.

My partner and I pick up our borrowed unit from CanaDream's helpful staff in Delta as smoke from the U.S. forest fires suffocates the Lower Mainland. I fall in love with our truck camper the moment we pull up to our driveway to pack it. As I hop up the back steps to wipe down its interior (which is hardly necessary as I'm pleased to discover it's already impeccably clean), I marvel at the camper's clever maximization of space.

At 23 feet total, from its back door to the front grille of the Ford Super Duty F-350 truck towing it, I'm astonished to find the space inside the RV doesn't feel cramped. With its ample windows, sizable kitchen sink, stove, table and banquette, loft bed, and small bathroom, the camper and I slip into an easy relationship, its proportions perfectly suited to my five-foot-tall (on skates) frame.

Granted, at a good foot taller than me, my partner faces a bit of a tighter squeeze, but he too quickly adapts and can soon be found happily reading a book at our kitchen table as dinner simmers on the stovetop.





*Sunset over Saltery Bay. Photo by Robin Perelle.*

Our journey begins on a Wednesday in mid-September as we catch the ferry to Gibsons to meander up the Sunshine Coast. By evening, we're standing on a private dock, the truck pulled into a perfect spot beside Klein Lake. There, we roast hot dogs over a campfire before retiring to the warmth of the RV for our first night.

In the morning, the lake is quiet except for the soft ribbit of frogs, cheeping of birds, flutter of dragonfly wings, and the occasional rustle of leaves as a breeze stirs the trees. I have found peace in the middle of a pandemic, and I am grateful.



*Horne Lake. Photo by Robin Perelle.*



The smoke gradually clears over southern B.C. and we're greeted by one beautiful fall day after another, as we make our way toward Lund via a series of remote lakes and bays. At Saltery Bay, my morning walk takes in the sweeping vistas of the sea as purple starfish hug the rocks by the shore. At Inland Lake Provincial Park, a sun-dappled forest trail brings us to a series of secluded sandy beach coves just big enough for a small picnic and a kayak or two.

Roaming up the coast, we encounter a community of friendly campers: a nice couple from Kamloops who, from a safe distance, show us their pop-up tent (which strives to mimic the RV's loft bedroom but falls short), and the hosts at SunLund who help us manoeuvre our first water, waste, and electricity campsite hookups (for the luxury of a hot shower in my own travelling bathroom).



*Our cozy RV bedroom. Photo by Robin Perelle.*

In Powell River, we deepen our understanding of the land we're exploring when we meet John from [Footprint BC](#) who takes us on a guided hike along the coastline, courtesy of Destination BC. He shows us traces of the Tla'amin Nation's former homes, before the mill pushed them off this part of their land, and teaches us which berries are edible and which tree stumps to check for old resin balls that make handy firestarters in a pinch.

A ferry crossing later, in Comox, we venture on to the water early one sunny morning with Captain Steve from [Island Pursuit Sport Fishing](#) to catch salmon off Hornby and Denman Islands. Steve grew up on boats in this area; his father, a commercial fisherman, is on his way home now after a month up north, with a nearly full hold. Moments after Steve sets the lines, we see our first wiggle on the portside rod. It's been a surprisingly good season since COVID restrictions eased here, he says; one of his guests recently caught a rare 62-pound chinook.





*Salmon fishing off Comox. Photo by Robin Perelle.*

The source of our first wiggle, reeled in from a depth of about 250 feet, is too small to legally keep; he promptly swims away the moment he's released. But within a few hours, we've pulled in two big catches, including a nice 15-pounder, and shared some unforgettable moments with five majestic humpback whales also fishing in the vicinity.

Back on land, we return to Horne Lake for our last night under the stars, our RV tucked away under a canopy of trees, as the rain begins to fall. I'm going to miss this, I realize. This could be a new way of life.

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