

things up. Parents can take up residence in a large two- or three-person tent, preferably with an awning and space for a makeshift kitchen. Then children of middle school age can sleep in their own two- or three-person tents, or share one with someone else. This will give them their own space to hang out in, or to retreat to after inevitable breakdowns of communication. (By the same token, if you're booking a hotel or resort, opt for a suite or two-bedroom unit.) Prepare sleeping spaces with air beds or mats, sleeping bags, pillows, and flashlights—and keep possessions away from the walls in case of rain.

three meals per day is essential. Opt for something simple for breakfast, such as porridge or granola. For lunch, try to introduce some daily variation. Chickpea salads, hot dogs, grilled cheeses, and sandwiches are all preservable and delicious options.

Keep the limited cooking utensils and cleanup in mind when it comes to dinner. Try a few one-pot meals like nachos, pastas, and curries.

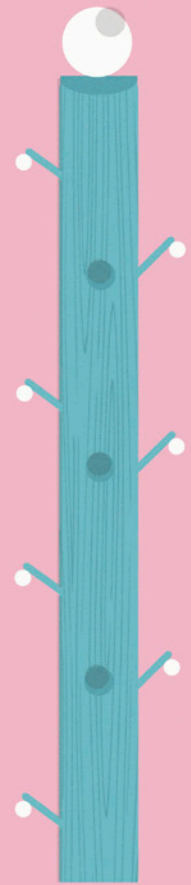
How to Move Around

Camping brings a range of options for exploring the immediate area. Hiking, for example, is a scenic way to navigate forests and coastal areas, offering stimulating opportunities for observing plants, birds, and other wildlife.

But do be careful to ensure your kids understand the importance of keeping to established trails. Biking is another fun way for middle schoolers to move around campsites and the areas surrounding them, especially if

Where to Eat

Whatever form your vacation takes, there's a strong likelihood your tweens won't want to stop what they're doing three times a day to sit in a dull restaurant with their parents. This headache can be easily avoided by packing healthy lunches and snacks: sandwiches, salads, nut bars, trail mix, and fresh fruit. If you're camping, planning out



the beach or lake is a long way from your tent. For trips further afield, to historical sites or natural phenomena, ask for your children's input.

Unexpected Twists

Children do get lost when exploring the great outdoors on hikes or even short jaunts through wooded areas, so it is imperative that they know what to do if this happens.

Make sure your kids are well-versed in these four key steps: First, they need to stay put as soon as they realize they've lost their bearings—tell them to hug a tree, make a nest, or something similar that conveys the point. Second, they need to call out for help, or at least make some repeated sound, every few minutes; a whistle reduces the energy a child can expend doing this. Third, they need to stay dry. Stuff a light poncho in their bag or pocket before setting out. Fourth, make sure they know help will be coming, whatever situation they find themselves in.

Hack

Allowing tweens to bring a friend on vacation is an absolute game changer in dealing with bad attitudes, and it's a strategy that could even result in an almost complete curtailment of difficult behavior.

A child with a friend around, with appearances to keep up and an identity to flesh out, is much less likely to act up. Additionally, if they have a companion, it's safer for them to go to nearby locations without you accompanying them.

For large families with children of different ages, bringing friends along also allows divergent age groups to split up and do different activities—and parents might even get the bonus of some quiet time without the kids around.