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Help me! It?s that time of year again

By SHERALYN ROMAN

Some people sing this song at Christmas and some, led by the advertising gurus at Staples, sing it in September. For a special select few, the words, ?It's the most wonderful time of the year? are not only music to their ears but also mean something altogether different from either the start of the school year or the march toward Christmas. For those people, NOT me I hasten to add, ?the most wonderful time of the year? refers to that time of year I've come to dread the most ? Camping Season. Why do I hate it so? Let me count the ways!

Camping Season, for those unfamiliar with the term, is the time when one packs up every single one of their worldly possessions into a vehicle, drives said vehicle due north through bumper to bumper traffic for three straight hours, to a wilderness destination otherwise considered uninhabitable by all except mosquitoes, black flies and horseflies. (To quote another song, these are not ?a few of my favourite things.?) On arrival, one unloads all those possessions into a tent (or for the really lucky, a tent/trailer) and then proceeds to ?live? in the wild, ?roughing? it very much like our ancestors did. We're supposedly ?living off the land? except for the $400 worth of groceries currently melting/spoiling in the cooler, and supposedly enjoying the great outdoors (except for that eight sided dining tent protecting us from bugs.) I don't know about you, but I'm pretty sure this is not how our ancestors actually lived and I KNOW it's not how I want to!

These days, camping seems to go from one extreme to the other. There's no better feeling than pulling up and parking your tent next to a shiny new Freightliner, 32 feet in length and fully equipped with satellite TV, a wet bar and air conditioning. Is that even camping? It's a house on wheels and a pretty nice one at that. I'm on day three with no shower while my neighbours are mixing martinis at their stand up bar! Who's having more fun? (Ummmm duh, they are!) Ever watched someone try to park one of these mini-hotels on wheels in a Canadian provincial park? Enjoying the wilderness is pretty darn hard when buddy across the way takes 18 attempts to back his luxe RV cabin cruiser into a space designed to accommodate, at most, a three-person tent. The back up warning beep will make you weep and seriously consider throwing yourself onto the campfire. These people aren't camping - they've got a juicer on the counter and a mortgage on the RV and claim to be ?roughing it?? I think not. When they return to the office in a week tanned, clean and super relaxed they will come face to face with me: angry, burnt and tired, ready for another week of vacation because camping in a tent, cooking over an open stove in the rain and not showering properly for ten days straight is no ones idea of a holiday!

For those of you that joke your idea of camping is to vacation at the Holiday Inn know that I am jealous. Yes, jealous. I'd take a Holiday Inn with the ?hot? breakfast (rubber eggs and all) included in your room price over camping any day. At least it's a bed, OFF the ground and when it rains, because it WILL rain, you have a fighting chance of staying dry. The pool full of soccer tournament kids splashing and wreaking havoc might be your idea of fun but it sure beats swimming in a lake where you can't see the bottom and you're not sure if that was a weed, a fish or the second coming of JAWS that just brushed your leg.

Ahhh Camping Season?..when your ?vacation? is done you get to lug all your possessions back home, wash every single darn thing, fumigate the tent and probably your cooler too and check the whole family for ticks. You'll still be finding dirt in your shoes for weeks to come and that one towel that fell in the camp bathroom? Just throw it out. You know you're never going to touch it again. What's the best part of camping season? When it's over.