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Reasons for Camping Boom in Japan



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ABSTRACT

Camping refers to living outdoors temporarily and is considered to bring great benefits, especially when working in nature. Living in the wilderness away from the city, which is an artificial space, requires various creative actions that are different from those of everyday life in the city. Individuals can discover the beauty and rigor of living in the wilderness when interacting with nature by staying in a camp. Also, climbing, fishing, swimming, and engaging in other activities at a camp allow individuals to stay in good physical shape. In recent years, camps have experienced a second boom in Japan. A characteristic reason for this trend is thought to exist. In this paper, in addition to the characteristics of the camp itself, we examine why camping is prevalent. As a result, characteristic reasons for the second boom of camps are as follows: camping is one of the few leisure activities that use automobiles, camping follows trends in social networking services (SNS), events held while camping has increased, and broadcasts of related animations and dramas on TV have increased.

INTRODUCTION

Camping means living outdoors temporarily¹. Today, most camps call for staying in tents or instant hut-like structures. However, in reality, camping has no particular restrictions and could involve living in natural terrains, such as in rock caves, or digging snow caves during snowy seasons. In a broad sense, camping refers to all outside (outdoors) temporary living situations.

Camps are believed to offer significant benefits, especially when being active. Living in the wilderness away from the city, which is an artificial space, requires various creative actions that are different from those of everyday life. Understanding the beauty and rigor of the wilderness when in nature is also possible. Besides, climbing, fishing, swimming, and engaging in other activities at a camp allow individuals to stay in good physical shape.

The camps listed here represent cases of camps that are themselves the main purpose. A combination of various outdoor activities and camps conducted by boy scouts², those conducted by organizations such as the YMCA during religious events, those unavoidably conducted by researchers for nature surveys, and those conducted by sports organizations, such as professional baseball, for off-season training are not included in this article because they have different main purposes or are just labels³. Regarding the categories, day camp (camping only during the daytime, such as when cooking rice and other food jointly outdoors during the daytime or barbecuing by the riverside), auto camp (in a narrow sense, a camp in which a car goes into the campsite and a tent is put up next to the car, or a camp in which individuals sleep in the car)⁴, and glamping (the official name is a glamorous camp; also known as luxury camping, it refers to a type of facility in which the services of a luxury hotel and the great outdoors are enjoyed) are included because they are only performed differently⁵.

In recent years, camping has boomed in Japan (Fig. 1)^{1,6}. It is thought that a characteristic reason exists for this trend. In this paper, we examine the characteristics of camps and why they are prevalent.

What you can learn by going camping (importance of camping)⁷

Many previous studies reported that we notice important things in life when we go camping^{3,4,8,9}. Camping has the following benefits. First, at camp, you can enjoy a life that is not tied to

anything. You do not need a lot of material things at a camp. If you bring too many things, then the camp will be no different from your home. At a minimum, you need a bed, food, and a relaxing chair. Some people feel a little inconvenienced; however, in reality, they are just right. You never notice the goodness of having various things in your daily life, but you can see it at camp.

Second, at camp, you can expand your imagination. There are many ways to play in nature. It might be interesting just to pile up stones like objects in a dry riverbed. You can pick up something in front of you, such as soil, and feel it with your skin. When playing in nature, we allow our imagination to grow. Be aware of something there, look for it, think about it, and make it bigger. Nature reminds us of things that we tend to forget when we are in the city.

Third, camp teaches us the importance of living on our own. In the city, it is easy to lose track of your habitual activities—your routines. You are free to oversleep at camp, but no one prepares breakfast. Changing your environment helps you notice your weak defenses.

Fourth, during your first experience at camp, a lot of learning happens. There are many things to experience the first time you go camping. There is a suitable time to go fishing (you must go depending on the activity of the fish), and you should not be impatient when cooking rice with fire. The wilderness also provides the opportunity to realize that what is usually small and sober is very important.

Fifth, camps make people believe that their worries are small. Work stress is also eliminated at camp, and the sickness of my heart disappears simply by looking at the flowing water and staring at the starry sky.

Sixth, camps teach us that we can rely on others to live. Few people can do everything they need to do outdoors. Fire is necessary for meals and having a skilled person teach you how to ignite a fire is a good idea. If you set up your tent in the wrong place, you might be in danger when sleeping. Gathering the knowledge essential to you from the people around you rather than collecting it all by yourself is quicker and easier.

Seventh, you can see that nothing changes if you do not have your smartphone at camp. In recent years, campsites also have Wi-Fi and radio waves, providing a social environment that can allow

you to connect with your everyday life. However, camps are also a place for extraordinary experiences. Turning off your smartphone for a short time might give you a different outlook. A large, natural panorama and the deliciousness of coffee to drink in the morning haze are typical experiences in front of the eye that can be shared with others. You might find yourself not caring about the number of likes that your posts get on social media.

Eighth, camp can create the opportunity to think about the fun of food-related knowledge and culture. Camp meals are often simple and easy. Even when you're hungry, you start by lighting a fire, making the challenge about how quickly and easily you can prepare your meal. Rice cooked with firewood is delicious. However, if the food is easy and quick to make and has no waste, there might be impressions that are not limited to the knowledge, culture, and taste associated with it. Even when you handle and cook the fish you catch, the history of outdoor food that has been passed down from ancient times—from how to handle to how to cook—is packed. Even if canning is mentioned, it can have a meaning other than just preserved food; for example, it is a prepared dish. The wisdom that can never be experienced by purchasing food at a convenience store and eating it seems to be acquired naturally at the camp.

Ninth, you can learn about the harshness of nature and enjoy it even more. Nature is harsh, whether for children or adults. Inevitably, you will experience the harshness of nature. There are times when you have to stand still to drive away insects that do not exist in the city, share a hard, narrow bed with your friends, and endure sudden heavy rains and cold winds. Such events might be rather enjoyable memories. Nature changes from moment to moment. Each time, everyone needs to decide according to the situation. Happenings are an integral part of camping. If you can enjoy the happening, you will have a strong heart that will not move regardless of what happens. Regular camps that allow you to immerse yourself in the harshness of nature can be great opportunities to remember things you tend to forget.

Tenth, at camp, you can sense the importance of experiencing the blessings of nature. When you spend most of your day in the city looking at your computer screen, you do not have the opportunity to feel nature. Suppose such a person goes to a place on the weekend that has a lot of nature. In the morning, at that place, you can experience the deliciousness of the moist and calm air and notice the beauty of the light at dusk. You can enjoy the freshness of the natural breeze—

not the air from the air conditioner. Your mind and body might feel refreshed from the stimulation of all five senses from the smells, sounds, and lights.

Eleventh, being in nature makes us aware of the importance of the natural sleep cycle. By moving away from artificial light, the body clock gradually returns to its original human rhythm. Start your activities at sunrise and go to bed at sunset. Living on this schedule will allow you to improve your overall health.

Twelfth, at camp, you notice the kindness and warmth of people. When in trouble, we think about being faced with the same problems. When camping, some equipment is often lacking. If you are not familiar with camping, you might not know how to set up a tent. Even in such a case, the campers around you are willing to help you without hesitation. For example, being given freshly brewed coffee or sharing your food with others feels very fun and warm.

Thirteenth, being aware of garbage might be cultivated. A basic principle at camp is to take your garbage home with you. We must not neglect our efforts to keep nature as we found it. Even if you return to life in the city, remembering your spirit as a camper should give you a great deal of awareness for environmental issues.

Finally, at camp, you can feel the beauty of the four seasons again. At camp, each season, the five senses directly teach us the grandeur and beauty of nature. Japan has four seasons, allowing you to experience the differences as the season change. You may be able to sense the chirping of birds crossing the grove, the rubbing sounds of leaves, and the river's babbling with a pleasant rhythm. On a cold morning in early spring, the breath of the trees in the forest smells in the dry air. If you participate in early summer, you can feel the powerful aroma of fresh green.

Camping allows you can feel the nature of the four seasons, which you cannot do in the city. By seeing and feeling information from nature that is normally invisible, you might regain the sensibilities that you originally had.

Disadvantages of camping¹

The previous section discussed the benefits of camping. In this section, we discuss the disadvantages of camping. First, camping costs money. Camping equipment is expensive, and

buying everything will be a considerable burden⁵. However, once you have your camping equipment, you can use them repeatedly, and your subsequent outlays will be almost zero. Collecting various items when camping is one of its pleasures. If you camp only once a year, you could rent instead of buy equipment.

Second, cleaning up and maintaining the camping equipment and tools is difficult. Regarding cleaning up, some people enjoy this task because it is still about camping. However, maintenance of muddy tents and tableware is very difficult and troublesome. One way to alleviate the difficulty is to ask a contractor for tents that are not difficult to maintain.

Third, camping can be dangerous. Of course, we believe that most people go camping only after checking out the campsite in advance. However, campers commonly find themselves in harsh conditions because of sudden weather changes. People who go solo camping might go into the woods instead of the campsite and enjoy camping in space; however, they can encounter wild animals or find themselves in distress. Planning a safe camp after carefully considering your skills and physical strength is preferred.

Why is camping so prevalent?

Japan is said to currently be in its second camp boom (Fig. 1)¹. The first boom occurred in the early 1990s. One reason the camp boom happened is that automobiles have become widespread, and for each family to have one is commonplace⁴. Along with that, leisure activities using automobiles as a means of transportation have prospered. The campsite has become a destination when going out with family and friends—one of many factors that have caused a boom in camping. There are many other reasons, such as camping being enjoyable by both adults and children and enabling the safe experience of an extraordinary experience⁴.

Social Networking Services (SNS) might be another reason the camp boom has rekindled¹. It is thought that many people have awakened to the charm of camping after trying it out and making it look good on Instagram. Quite possibly, diffusion power, which is the greatest attraction of SNS, is working and is triggering the boom.

Also, events and festivals are riding the wave of the camp boom and can be enjoyed when camping at campsites. Camps are also being held at other outdoor facilities throughout the

country, allowing event participants to experience camping. It is thought that the camp boom accelerated during a stretch because of the increase in such opportunities. Other than that, camp anime and live-action dramas, which began broadcasting on TV in 2018, also stimulated people who had never been previously interested in camping. Making camping widely known might have sparked the camp boom in recent years¹.

CONCLUSION

In the current camp boom, an increasing number of people are camping solo (alone), unlike traditional group camps⁶. By sharing videos through SNS and YouTube, a synergistic effect from people watching others go camping is occurring¹⁾. In the past, only working adults and those who could prepare properly went camping. Today, people of different ages and genders, such as high school students and women, behave differently than they used to and now enjoy camping and other previously unconventional situations. Glamping is becoming possible in many places, enabling camping to be experienced in a more comfortable manner⁵.

In contrast, the idea that camps are effective for children's emotional education has also surfaced^{8,10}. Currently, in Japan, education that has escaped from the cram-free education model and is packed with a large amount of knowledge and skills is being revived at schools¹¹. Even if you remember the knowledge, you already know and score points on paper tests, you will not acquire the true power that you need to live. Many problems are around us and events that we do not understand, that remain unsolved, and are unexpected happen daily. If you can think about what to do at that time and the type of action to take, you should be able to open up the future while collaborating with others. To do so, we need creativity and critical thinking to see the essence of things, as well as abilities, such as communality. Also, even if you do not have the knowledge and have a high ability to live, you might be able to manage unknown and unanswered problems. Camp skills and experience are believed to be useful in such situations. In the past, continuously participating in boy scouts and experience camping was common. However, in recent years, camp classes seem to be held for just a limited period¹¹.

The camp boom is expected to continue in the future. In particular, as a preventive measure against COVID-19, which has become prevalent worldwide in 2020, three densities (sealed, dense, and close) should be avoided in Japan¹². Camping is an action that does not conflict with

this statement and is a recreation that both adults and children can enjoy⁴. We hope that camping will become more prosperous through the elimination of the disadvantages (for example, high cost and troublesome preparation) and by making it easier to participate.

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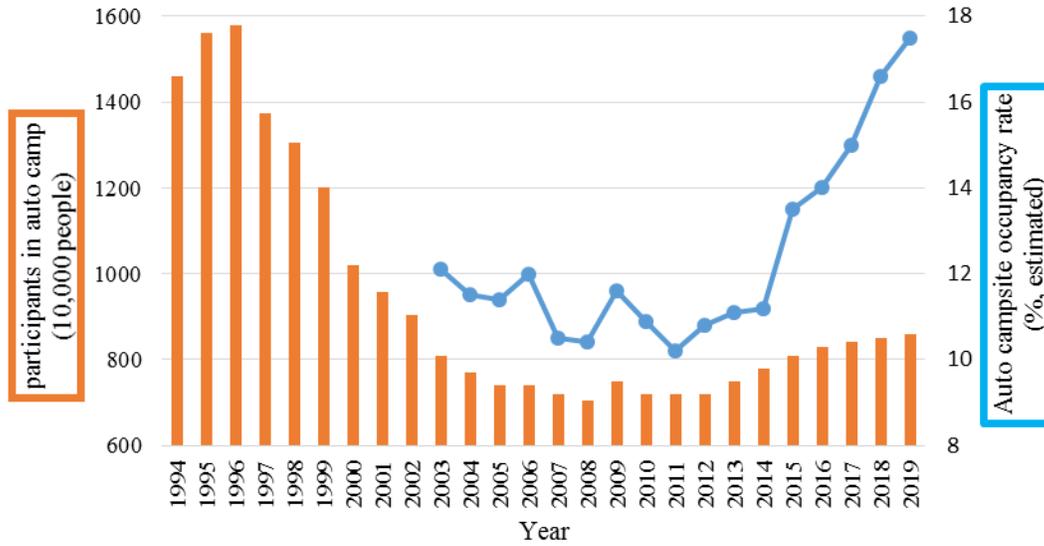


Figure No. 1: Changes in the population participating in auto camps and the occupancy rate of auto campsites in Japan

Based on the data in references 5), 10), 11), and 13).

