

HOTEL TRENDS • LISTINGS • MAPS

TRAVEL WEEKLY

2009 ULTIMATE HOTEL GUIDE

What was will be once more.



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MAUNA KEA BEACH HOTEL

KOHALA COAST

roughing it (sort of)

BY JERRY SOVERINSKY

CAMPING HAS NEVER BEEN SO CHIC

It's one of those client wishes that seems impossible to satisfy.

Paws Up Provided by Paws Up



"I love the outdoors," they begin, "but there's no way I'd ever camp."

"On the other hand," they continue, "I love campfires, the sounds of a raging river, the seclusion of the backwoods. ... But I like a nice bed, too."

They sense your response, and quickly preempt you.

"But no walls, either. I'm not looking for a cabin — it's not close enough to the outdoors."

And to make sure your search is entirely in vain, they add, matter-of-factly: "Oh, and I don't want to do any of that messy outdoor work, either; you know, chopping or cooking or even staking ... but I actually like things chopped, cooked and staked."

And finally, for good measure, they leave you with, "See what you can find."

You'd have better luck fixing the global economy, you think. But there's actually a solution: Glamping — short for "glamorous camping" — is a growing trend in the hospitality industry that, like some African safari camps, offers the perfect mix of wilderness and luxury digs.

At Glacier National Park, The Resort at **Paws Up** offers two such "camps," nestled unobtrusively within a 37,000-acre Blackfoot Valley estate on the very land that Captain Meriwether Lewis trekked through more than two centuries ago.

Both **Tent City** and **River Camp** are six-tent "compounds," the former carved out of a generous patch of Montana wilderness, the latter assembled along a gentle bank of the Blackfoot River.

The tents — more like canvas resort suites — feature 270-square feet of living space, a king-sized bed (or two twins), top-quality furniture and accessories, the finest linens, art-adorned canvas walls and, of course, electricity, which comes in particularly handy when you need to run the tent's fan or heater, depending on the weather. Steps away from each tent is a private bathroom, complete with heated floors, massive showers, marble-topped vanities and the finest bath products. Both the tents and bathrooms are kept meticulously clean, thanks to twice-daily housekeeping service.

New for 2008, **River Camp** offers two-room "tent suites." Designed for families, they feature the same luxury touches as the original tents, with 468-square feet of space.



Provided by Paws Up

Each compound has its own dining pavilion, where a well-groomed chef stirs up three squares daily, plus snacks (they're notorious for their killer s'mores).

Glamping — short for “*glamorous camping*” — is a growing trend in the hospitality industry that offers the perfect mix of wilderness and *LUXURY* digs.

For non-culinary-related needs, both **Tent City** and **River Camp** provide a dedicated “butler,” a do-it-all, know-it-all personal concierge who tends to the guests’ every wish. During my stay, an enthusiastic guest preferred an early morning jog. His personal butler had a steaming pot of coffee brewed and delivered during his personal wake-up call at 4:30 a.m. When the guest returned from his run, freshly squeezed juice was waiting for him, along with a copious breakfast (so I’m told; I myself preferred a far more passive wake-up, long after the moon had been obscured by sunlight).



During the day, **Tent City** and **River Camp** visitors can take advantage of a host of active adventures, including horseback riding, ATV rides, guided hikes, climbing, white-water rafting, shooting and fly-fishing. There’s also **Spa Town**, a collection of 11 canvas treatment tents nestled peacefully in an undisturbed meadow, which offers a comprehensive collection of therapies to soothe any ache or stress, along with a fitness “room” for those requiring the most up-to-date cardio or weightlifting challenge. Finally, kids are given special attention, with **Paws Up**’s well-organized **Kids Camp** providing hands-on interactive games and activities supervised by its well-trained, professional staff. All of the above are a la carte activities that range in price from \$35 for a two-hour guided hike to \$450 for a full-day fly-fishing boat trip for two.

Owing to Montana weather, **Tent City** and **River Camp** are open from late-May through late-September only. Available year-round, though, **Paws Up** offers 28 private luxury homes that accommodate from two to eight people each. Dramatically well-appointed, they offer the ultimate indulgences with full access to all of **Paws Up**’s resort activities and guest amenities. Guests exchange canvas walls for rigid wood, and they lose the personal chef and butler, too (though for a fee, both can appear on-site at the private homes).

Prices for **Tent City** and **River Camp** begin at \$695 per night for two people (River Camp’s “tent suites” start at \$1,095 for two adults and two children) and include meals, airport transfers, snacks, and on-property transportation (alcohol, activities, 7% Montana tax, and 18% resort fee are all extras). There is a two-night minimum per tent, and most fill up months in advance, so book early.

Glamping. Camping for non-campers. And everyone else, too.

Agents earn 10% commission on lodging only. 866-894-7969; www.pawsup.com.

getting there

Paws Up is located in Greenough, Mont., 30 miles northeast of Missoula. Round-trip airport transfers are included for guests.

Pre- and Post-Camp

Missoula’s Doubletree Hotel offers a special Paws Up Resort rate for its guests. It’s the area’s most comfortable base from which to explore both Missoula and the surrounding Blackfoot Valley, and many Paws Up guests pay a visit either before or after their Paws Up stay. Located on the Clark Fork River, a five-minute walk to the city center. Complimentary airport shuttles available to all guests. 406-728-3100. www.missoulaedgewater.doubletree.com

Glamping on the Rise

Lest you think Paws Up holds a stranglehold on an isolated, quirky niche, think again. A 2007 article in *USA Today* noted that “glamping” facilities are turning up in reports from the United Kingdom and Canada. Among the more popular:

Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (wildretreat.com), in Tofino, British Columbia, offers “some of the most breathtakingly beautiful wilderness frontier left on the planet.” Guests choose from 20 luxury tents, among other deluxe accommodations.

El Capitan Canyon (elcapitancanyon.com), in Santa Barbara, Calif., boasts that its more than two dozen luxury cabins and tents offer “the same comfortable accommodations any Santa Barbara hotel can provide.”

A facility called **Longitude 131°** (longitude131.com.au) in Australia’s Outback promises the utmost comfort and serenity, plus an experience that “nurtures your body, stimulates your mind and liberates your spirit.”

Guests reach the **Four Seasons Tented Camp Golden Triangle** (fourseasons.com/goldentriangle), hidden away in the jungles of Thailand, by riverboat. A rather arduous beginning, but from there it’s Four Seasons pampering the rest of the way (right down to the hand-hammered copper bathtubs) in its 15 magnificent tent properties.