

MY GUIDE TO CAMPERFORCE

How to Plan & Prepare

Written by Sharee Collier

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Introduction

My Guide to Camperforce.

After working for Camperforce in 2013 and 2015, I noticed a few things that I felt would be helpful to know up front and few others that would just be nice to know for other Workampers® considering working with the program.

I thought to myself, how can I deliver this content to the very people who need it the most? The answer I came up with was to write and publish *My Guide to Camperforce*, a resource of information pertaining to the program from a fellow Workamper® who's been in the trenches and knows the ropes.

My Guide to Camperforce, is an informative guide built from my personal experiences and also a game plan to help guide my family to an even smoother journey, if we decided to sign up for another round in the future.

We really struggled during our stay in Kentucky in 2013, as you'll read about shortly, and believe me, those days were pretty stressful for a mother of four. But with some planning, preparation and forethought we were able to avoid those struggles in 2015, which ultimately allowed us to really enjoy the Camperforce program.

I knew this information needed to be shared with others considering signing up for Camperforce, because the information we found on the internet was not always accurate and most was not even helpful. The amount of exaggerated information I found would have been comical, if it weren't being portrayed as the truth. And with no other family's tale to base our journey off of- we were left winging something that really required planning and preparation.

In this guide, I'll take you through the entire journey from start to finish, preparing your family and mine for the upcoming CamperForce Season, while making one simple promise straight from the start... I won't pretend I know everything about Amazon's Camperforce or what working there is like for everyone. I'll just tell you about my own journey from the two seasons I worked for them and base my knowledge, tips, recommendations and stories on things I've actually witnessed and experienced.

Our Story

My name is Sharee Collier and in 2013 my husband, Antwon, and I decided to sign up for the Camperforce program as our first workamping gig, after purchasing our very first Motorhome. Our family, which consists of Antwon, myself, and our four school aged children, had just recently decided to ditch the stereotypical American Dream and travel fulltime throughout the United States. We knew nothing about RVing, camping or even manual labor, but we were willing to give it a try...

We were under the false impression that Camperforce would be a walk in the park. We'd sign up for about a month, make some extra cash, see the inside of the Amazon fulfillment center and be on our way with tons of great campfire stories. Somehow we had the idea, that if Workampers® twice are age were doing it, well then it would be easy for us. We were young!

After our first week, when our new shoes were 'broken in' and our bodies ached just about everywhere you can imagine, and some places you can't, we were quickly brought down off our young pedestal. Age, apparently, had nothing to do with it, because even the retirees were lapping us! They arrived early, stayed late and keep smiling while working through this extremely physical job. We left with a sour taste in our mouths, vowing to never, ever return- and canceling our Prime Membership was a option we thought of many times!

Fast forward 2 years later- we made the crazy decision to come back. No way could Camperforce get the best of us! We needed to come back, conquer this workamping gig and make sure we had an amazing time. We knew it was possible., but we had to get organized and really plan this out.

With 2 years to think about what went so terribly wrong, we came up with a list of things that we should of, could of, and would of. When we returned in 2015, much to many permanent employees' surprise, we were in the best spirits with the most positive attitudes and the biggest smiles.

We took everything the job threw at us and managed to have an amazing time. When we left this time, we left with our heads held high, giving hugs, flashing smiles, and leaving a trail of sunshine behind us.

We crossed it off our bucket list and left feeling better than ever!



Know the Basics



- **The Run Down**
- **What's it like?**
- **Application Process**
- **Top 3 Job Picks**
- **Our Recommendations**
- **An Insider Glance**

The Run Down

WHO:

Just about anyone and everyone can work the Camperforce program. People of all ages and backgrounds in all different rigs, campers and RVs. If you're relatively healthy, over the age of 18, able to pass a drug screening and background test and you have a 'recreation vehicle', you're probably over qualified. Check the website for exact details.

WHAT

Camperforce is all about working in one of the nation's largest online retailer's warehouses. Amazon calls them fulfillment centers, but in an attempt to clarify, I'll make it clear- you will be working in an extremely large warehouse (possibly the size of a small village) with all the pros and cons that it entails.

WHERE:

Camperforce is available at select fulfillment centers throughout the US. In 2015 there were 4 centers recruiting for the Peak season. Jeffersonville, IN, Campbellsville, KY, Murfreesboro, TN or Haslet, TX. Check online for specifics.

WHEN:

The season starts sometime in early to mid August and spans through Thanksgiving ending right before Christmas. Actually to be specific, the program boasts the ability to release campers on or before December 23.

WHY:

Holiday orders of course! Camperforce is the brainchild that allows Amazon to keep up with supply and demand when it comes to pumping out millions of orders, usually in 2 days or less, while guaranteeing product accuracy and on time delivery.

HOW:

An RV is your ticket to Camperforce. The program was designed for RVers looking for temporary employment while traveling in the United States. While campers come in all shapes and sizes, the bottom line is having one.

WORDS OF CAUTION:

While the program is open to hiring applicants of all ages and physical strengths- it is wise not to over estimate your own capabilities. These jobs are all very physical, so walking, standing for long periods, as well as lifting, bending and using multiple sets of stairs is required constantly throughout the day. Know your limits and make sure the job you sign up for is at a comfortable level within your physical ability.



What's it like?

What's it like to work at Amazon.com is a typical question– that everyone seems to want the answer to. The only problem is...

There really isn't a typical answer.

Working for the online super giant, is truly an experience that's hard to put into words. There are so many pieces to the story that need to be told and usually very little time to tell it. To be honest, working at Amazon can best be described as working for a well oiled machine. I know that sounds cliché, but it's true. Everything from the moment you step inside the building is planned, timed, scheduled, organized and then constantly being tracked, measured and observed for ways to make it better.

Working in one of their fulfillment centers, inside the Camperforce program, means working for one of the largest, if not the largest, online retailer in the World. You're on the inside and you'll soon see first hand what happens after a customer makes a purchase from their computer screen. You're working day in and day out to fill orders not only for customers, but most likely for your family members as well. Time is everything and your 'numbers' will show how your performance rates against the typical Amazon employee.

A typical day depends on which department you're working in, the number of orders to be filled and what shift you're working on. Generally you'll clock in after entering the building and dropping off personal items in your locker. Clocking in for the day is sight to see! Employees line up at every time clock and wait patiently for the exact second when their shift begins.

Next, you'll walk to your start-up area and meet with your department heads at a start up meeting where basic stretching is completed while important information is relayed through your Manager. After setting off to your station, or if you're a Picker– wherever your scanner directs you. Your day will progress until either a scheduled break, lunch or the end of your shift.

Throughout the day, there is limited time to socialize with fellow campers or employees (unless of course you're a Picker) but making time for a quick "How's it going?" will help you maintain your sanity, after hours and hours of repetition and checking your productivity.

At the end of your shift, you'll again notice an extremely long line of campers and employees at each time clock. As they wait for the clock to tick– conversations about 'work' and 'numbers' fill the air until the exact moment their badges touch the scanner and they exit the building!

That is about as typical as it gets...

Application Process

With freshly printed plans, schedules and lists in hand I eagerly rushed to submit my application for the 2015 Peak Season. I raced to upload my resume, then waited patiently for a reply.

After days of waiting, I remembered the Application Process...

First Things First:

For first time applicants the application and hiring process for the Camperforce program can be long, drawn out and filled with delayed responses. From the moment you submit your resume or online application, wheels will naturally begin moving in your head. You're ready to go! Right? Well, not so fast. When they say Application Process, they really mean it.

I would allow at least a month lead time from start to finish, and more likely 2-3 months. There are hundreds of applicants sending in their resumes and only a small on site staff of HR personnel to sort through them all. Give them some time and just plan on waiting a few days between emails and sometimes even up to a week in between steps.

Online Application

Fill out the online application on the Amazon website.

Proof of Education

You must be a High School Graduate or equivalent.

Background Test & Drug Screening

More paperwork and a urine screening at a local facility.

Start Date

Sent by email, this is the exact date you will start work. It can be adjusted, if needed, by either party...

Pre-Employment Paper Work

A lot of forms, needing to be completed prior to your start date.

Orientation

A few hours of Amazon policies and protocols. Picture releases, great Camperforce stories and time to meet the group of campers starting the program right along with you! Sometimes, orientation can be followed by a few hours of training inside the fulfillment center, so wear appropriate shoes!

I noticed a woman wearing wooden clogs in orientation last year- and felt bad while watching her shift back and forth in total discomfort, during 2 hours of standing for Safety School inside the fulfillment center!

What are the Benefits for Camperforce?

We recommend starting your application as soon as you start thinking about working the Camperforce program. Along with being one of the most widely chosen Fall employment gigs, Camperforce offers great benefits for their seasonal employees, which include the following:

- Paid campsites
- Paid wages,
- Overtime
- Shift differentials
- Completion bonuses
- Paid referral bonuses
- Employee Benefit Plan

Top 3 Job Picks

STOWING



Stow: (v) to put into a place for storage.

Ex.) Employees will stow merchandise into their assigned bins, within the fulfillment center.

When merchandise is received in the fulfillment center, the associates in the Stowing Department have the job of making sure it reaches the shelves not only in a timely manner, but also with the correct labels and into the correct bin, so that Pickers can retrieve the items with relative ease. Stowers typically walk between 5-8 miles per day.

PICKING



Pick: (v) to choose from a group

Ex.) Make sure to pick the exact item, as described on your scanner to avoid mistakes.

After products have been stowed properly, Pickers receive bin locations on their scanners, report to that location, and ultimately retrieve the correct product with 100% accuracy. The Picking Department is the largest department, involves the most walking (ranging between 8-12 miles per day) and makes up the majority of available jobs for Camperforce.

PACKING



Pack: (v) to put into or arrange compactly

Ex.) Pack your items securely by using cello to fill your boxes, before applying the label.

The Packing Department waits for the filled totes to arrive at their stations, on conveyor belts. They then sort and pack the items into boxes to fulfill specific customer orders. Packing requires less walking than the above two departments, but physical activity is still required.

Our Recommendations

You might enjoy Stowing if...

You're riding the fence. You don't mind a fair amount of exercise, nothing too extreme like walking all day long, but you want to move around a bit. You don't mind bending, squatting, or lifting and you want to mingle with other Workampers® during the day. If this sounds like you, stowing is a great option.

You might enjoy Picking if...

You're a go getter! You want to be in the trenches, where all the action is. You don't mind physical labor— and you could use some exercise and maybe even the loss of a few pounds. You see walking up and down stairs as a leg workout. You love to walk and pushing a cart makes you feel like shopping. If this sounds like you, picking is your perfect position!

You might enjoy Packing if...

You're really not interested in walking. You have no desire to lose weight or get to know the entire layout of the Amazon fulfillment center. You want to go to work, do your job, and go home. Mingling, chit-chat and socialization aren't high priorities. If this sounds like you, packing is your go-to department!

Gift Wrap

Back in 2013, I was recruited to help out in Gift Wrap. All but too glad to get out of Picking and give my feet some R&R, I eagerly took the new assignment and enjoyed every minute I didn't have to walk!

While campers are not usually given a permanent assignment in this department, recruitment during PEAK and labor sharing during busy times, are both possibilities. Volunteering for odd jobs like this, will break up the monotony of weeks and weeks of working in your chosen department.

After Christmas orders start rolling in, if you're in need of a change of pace or scenery, gift wrap might be the perfect escape!

Ship Dock

My husband Antwon, had the pleasure of working on the Ship Dock during our 2015 Season with Camperforce. He absolutely enjoyed every moment. While the work was more physically demanding than any other department, he enjoyed the heart of the well oiled machine aka the Ship Dock.

Working on the Ship Dock, requires discipline and attention to detail. As the final stage in fulfilling customer orders, mistakes must be caught and corrected.

As the only Workamper® on the Ship Dock in 2015, Antwon was quickly recognized for his hard work and ability to learn quickly & master tasks, by Management, ultimately shining a light to spotlight the jobs well done by Camperforce associates, as a whole.

Although it is not the first place Workamper® are placed to work, it definitely is not out of the picture.

If this sounds like your type of work, make a note on your application, it never hurts to ask.

An Insider Glance



- 1 Yoga Pants:** Walking 10+ miles a day is easier when you're dressed for comfort.
- 2 Walking Shoes:** Make sure you break them in and have a spare pair or two— to alternate or swap out during the season.
- 3 Thin Outer Layer:** A small t-shirt under a light over shirt made it easy to stay cool and warm depending on which building I was in.
- 4 Clear Fanny Pack:** A welcome gift from Amazon, that allows you to keep your essentials like lip balm and peppermints with you throughout the day.
- 5 Lanyard & Badge:** Easily keep track of your Employee Badge with the Camperforce Lanyard.
- 6 Concrete Floors:** Rough on your knees and back, the entire first floor is solid concrete.
- 7 Conveyor System:** Over a million miles of conveyors make up the inside of the Amazon fulfillment center. It's quite amazing!
- 8 Totes:** Items for orders are placed inside, packed, then shipped out. Every tote in the building can be accounted for by their barcode.
- 9 Pick Mod:** Basically a work area, where Stowers place the merchandise on the shelves and Pickers pick them back off, piece by piece.

MAKING BIG DECISIONS



- **Deciding Who Will Work**
- **Days vs. Overnights**
- **Choosing a Start Date**
- **Planning Your Arrival**
- **Choosing a Location**
-

Deciding Who Will Work

One of the first big decisions , especially for families, is deciding who will be working at Amazon? Is Mom working? Is Dad working? Both Parents?

Who will work Camperforce?

Think long and hard about this question, because it will ultimately decide what type of experience you have after your arrival. Mom may be better suited to work this gig if she's in better physical shape or needs and wants some good exercise. Dad might be better qualified if he has some warehouse experience and feels confident in his ability to work longer hours and do more overtime. And don't judge the opposite shifts without giving it full consideration. You'll be able to double your money in the same amount of time- and may not have to work for the rest of the Winter, and maybe even the Spring!

If Both Parents are working...

This scenario is very doable. And even though it can be a bit tricky when trying to accommodate for school aged children- it can be done. If both parents are working, one will need to take the overnight shift and one will work during the day. Both have their pros and cons, but in my opinion the overnight is far more difficult, especially if you're not a 'night owl' to begin with. In my family, I worked the day shift and Antwon worked the overnight. He tends to stay up late regardless, so it was easier for him to transition to the schedule than it would've been for me.

When we first made the decision to work at Amazon, we thought nothing of the logistics behind expecting to both work. We figured we'd work opposite shifts, one on days and one on the overnights and that was that. When we spoke with the recruitment team- they had never had a couple with children both want to work. And had never been faced with the issues this simple request would soon present.

It never crossed any of our minds that with only one car- travel times would not be in our favor. This simple oversight caused us all much distress- and almost caused Antwon to be released from the program. How did that happen? It's really a long story but the short summary is this...

I left 5 minutes early every day from my shift. (This was allowed by the Amazon's time clock policy- which allows employees to clock in and out within a 5 minute allowance, without being considered late, resulting in a 'points infraction'.) I did my best to safely drive as fast as possible back to the campground without making any stops. Once I parked, Antwon jumped in the driver's seat and drove as fast as he possibly could back to the fulfillment center to clock in 5 minutes late- everyday. Once in a while, unfortunate events would make the drive longer than expected. Sometimes that consisted of an extra traffic light, or a family of deer crossing the road. On these days- Antwon was more than 5 minutes late and received an attendance point infraction. After 5.5 of these, termination was an option. As these days added up, we began to count down- to the day we would leave. We managed to make it out just by the skin of our teeth...

Days vs. Overnights

Picking a Shift and Sticking To It

You only have one chance to pick your shift, so your family needs to decide what shift or shifts, if both parent are working, will work best. Keep in mind all shifts are 10.5 hours long and include only a 30 minute lunch break and (2) 15 minute breaks. The day shift will start around 6am and the overnight around 5:30pm.

Working the days shift will allow someone who enjoys the social aspect of working to flourish, while working on the overnight shift will give someone who just wants to get the job done, the space to excel.

I'm sure you've noticed by now, but if you haven't... I'm a talker. I love to talk to new people, hear new stories and get to know people from different backgrounds. I really enjoyed the day shift for this reason. Working during the day, there were tons of opportunity to chit-chat. While I've never done the overnights, I have to assume, people wouldn't be so chatty and social at the wee hours of the night- so I have to assume it's just not for me.

My husband, Antwon, on the other hand is the ying to my yang (or maybe the opposite.) He's much more reserved. He's quite social and does his fair share of chit-chat, but never too much. He enjoys a quiet hour or two, with just lean productivity. He was able to thrive on the overnight, because there were few distractions. As he described it, people were there to work, not mingle. He knew what he was supposed to do and did it with little socialization (or fun in my opinion).

Guilty Feelings from Mom:

Working the day shift, I always felt really bad for my husband. He not only got (in my opinion) the short end of the stick, by being on the overnight with a very physical job on the Ship Dock, but he also had to tend to 4 kids at home while trying to get enough sleep for the next days shift.

After seeing how hard it was on him in 2013- I offered to take the overnights this time. His manly ego objected several times over, and I was left to figure out ways to make his life easier, since he insisted it was best.

I tried to relieve his workload as best I could, by being prepared with plans for meals and school work for the kids. All he had to do was follow the step by step guide and use the extra free time to catch some extra sleep!

When you're deciding which shift to work, think about the following 6 questions:

- Who has experience working overnight shifts?
- Who can meet the physical requirements of the overnight shift?
- Who is an extrovert?
- Who is an introvert?
- Who can realistically sleep during the day and take care of the kids' needs?
- Who needs less sleep?
- Who doesn't mind carpooling?

Choosing When to Start

When to start

As with many jobs, during the application process you'll have the ability to select when you're available, as well as, how much notice you need prior to the start date your given to report to work. The season will open in early to mid-August, but you can pick any time before the close of the season as your availability date. Camperforce has start groups that come in all season long- so keep that in mind when picking your availability date.

Avoid Being Too Early & Too late

In 2013, we signed up as part of the last recruitment start group. Thinking it would be best to start as late as possible, since it was our first time- our start date was Nov. 11. We had read some horror stories- and wanted to make sure, that just incase it was too demanding, we wouldn't have committed for longer than we would be physically comfortable for.

Not only did this backfire and make our lives miserable, but it was also made plainly clear that we had indeed signed on for longer than we were comfortable with, after just the first week. Coming in so late, for our first time- just didn't give enough time for our bodies to adjust to the physical requirements- so we were constantly tired and fatigued. A late start would great for someone who is in great physical condition with warehouse experience, who plans to make a few extra dollars in a short period of time. On the other hand, starting too early can have its own set of drawbacks and can lead to burn out prior to the end of the season. You start strong and finish (hopefully) feeling like the job got the best of you! I've personally seen quite a few Workampers® barely able finish the season and collect their bonus. They push through and when asked about their start date- they usually said the same thing... I came in the first group.

I recommend starting in either mid-September or mid-October

One thing to keep in mind is this- Once you inform the HR Department of the date you are available to work... you can bet your bottom dollar that your start date will be scheduled as close to it as possible. They have thousands of applicants to filter into their fulfillment centers, as quickly as they can, to ensure customer orders are filled in a timely matter.

**So, if you're available in August,
but would prefer to start in October...**

Don't write down August!

Write down October.



Choosing a Location

Which location is the best?

The answer is actually a matter of personal taste and opinion. When choosing which of the available locations, you apply and ultimately work at during the Peak season, can depend on several factors, including current location, travel length and distance, available recreation activities, campground accommodations and even travel distance to and from work. You'll have to be the judge for yourself!

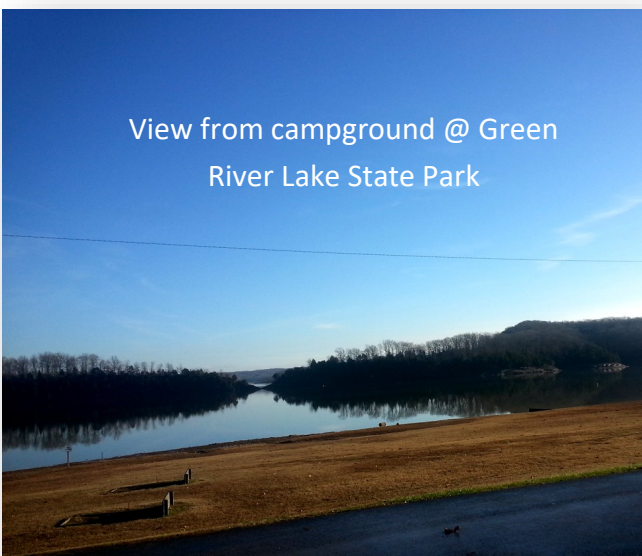
We've only worked at the Campbellsville location, so maybe our judgement is skewed– but it's definitely a place we recommend other workamping families give a try. While we can't discredit the atmosphere at the other locations or the experience you could have there, we have no information on those locations to provide.

Let's talk about Campbellsville

Definitely at the top of many lists, Campbellsville is one of the oldest fulfillment centers in the Amazon brand. Their workforce is mature, their procedures are tested and they have the most experience with Camperforce, as the oldest FC offering the program.

The staff and employees, at the Campbellsville location, as well as the surrounding community are very welcoming. They appreciate the Camperforce program and the wealth of additional income it brings to the area during the 3-4 month period.

From the Veterinarians who love to pamper friendly travel companions to the local shoe stores, who eagerly anticipate the extra sales of thick soled sneakers to Amazon workers throughout the Peak season, you'll feel welcome everywhere you go!



Fun around Campbellsville

- ⇒ **Green River Lake State Park:** Offers camping, hiking, beautiful views and an amazing Halloween program.
- ⇒ **Makers Mark Distillery:** Outside of town, offering tastings, tours and a 'dip-your-own' gift shop for all your souvenir favorites.
- ⇒ **Family Bowling Center:** Discounts on shoes and games on Family Night.
- ⇒ **Movie Theater:** Catch a flick and grab popcorn and snacks on your way in.
- ⇒ **Local Library:** Offered a family game night during 2015 as well as library cards for Workampers® .
- ⇒ **Fish Hatchery:** Learn all about trout from the staff then take some time to fish in the stream for yourself.
- ⇒ **Mammoth Cave National Park:** A short drive through Bowling Green– features much for families and outdoor enthusiasts.

Planning Your Arrival

When is the best time to arrive on site?

Amazon welcomes Camperforce employees to make their site reservations soon after submitting their applications. As you can probably imagine– there are limited spaces available at the popular campgrounds, and to ensure you get one of your top choices, its definitely a good idea to put in your reservation early. Amazon will pay for your site fees for 2 days prior to your start date, during your employment and for 1 day after your release.

Pay for a few extra nights

While you will have to pay the site fees for the extra days outside of their allowance, I advise families in particular to book for at least a week ahead of their start date. This gig will be a wild a ride, so make it easy on everyone by arriving a few days, if not a week early to settle in. Spend time together exploring the local area, finding out where the laundry mat, grocery store, and library are and setting up your campsite for the best s'more roast in town!

If you're working opposite shifts from your spouse, this will also give you guys some time to make adjustments, before diving right into life with opposite 10.5 hours work schedules.

Stagger you start dates

Another consideration, if both parents are planning on working opposite shifts, is to weigh the option of staggering your start dates. In 2015, I started working the day shift towards the end of September and Antwon didn't start the overnights until just before Halloween. By starting about a month before my husband it really worked out well for us in 3 main ways:

1. **Antwon was able to prepare for the overnights:**

We practiced for the entire month. Every day he would follow the meal plans and the schedule , until it was natural. He also stayed awake later and later each night until he established his sleep routine.

2. **The kids eased into the crazy Amazon schedule:**

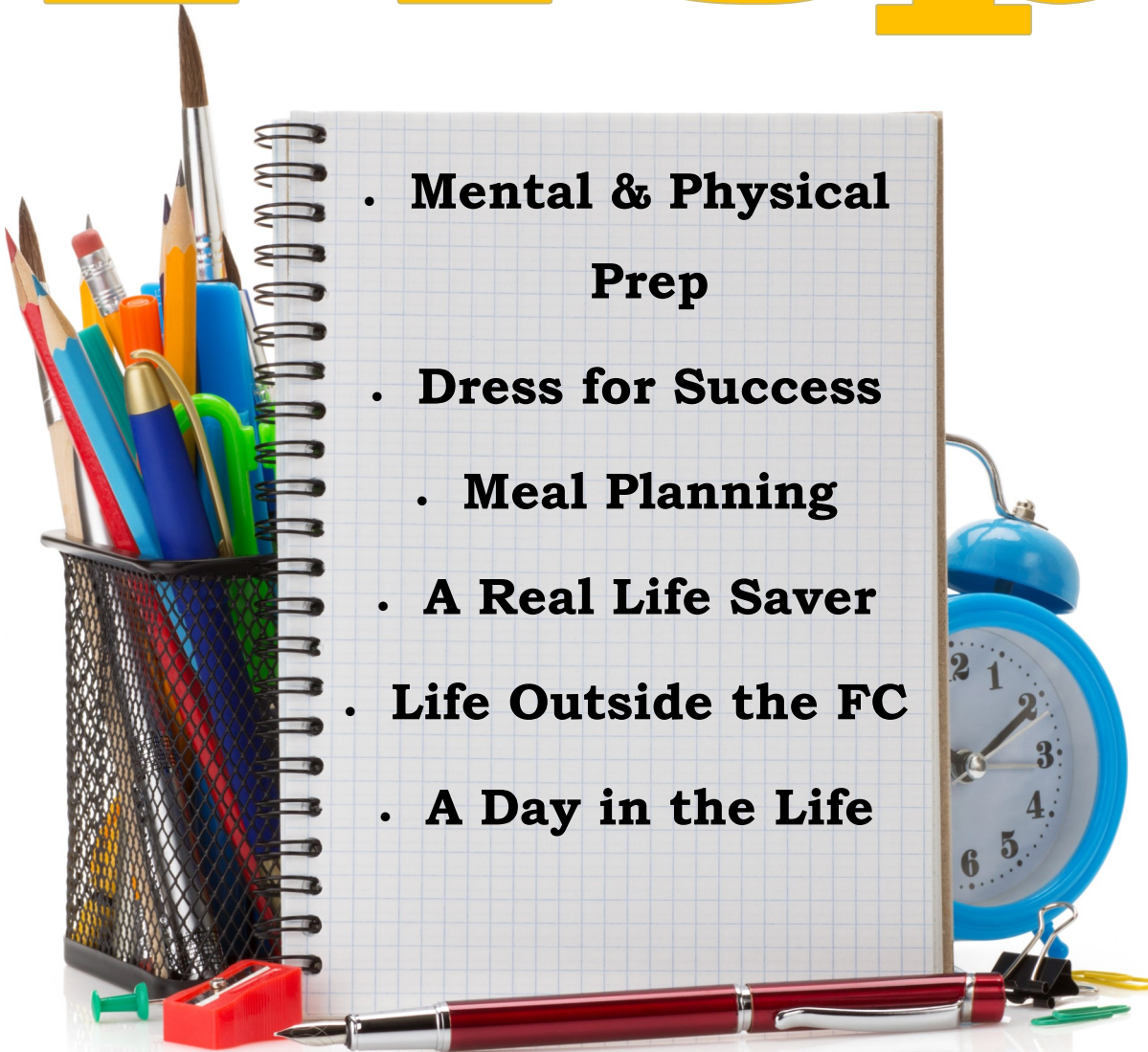
Our kids needed this time more than anyone. They needed to transition into doing their lessons independently, fixing their own snacks, and helping out with chores to keep the Collier Train running smoothly.

3. **Extra time with Dad was enjoyed and cherished:**

This was a treat, especially when compared to our prior experience. We didn't get to enjoy much time with Antwon the first time, so having extra time to warm up to the craziness was special for everyone.



Plan & Prep



- **Mental & Physical Prep**
- **Dress for Success**
- **Meal Planning**
- **A Real Life Saver**
- **Life Outside the FC**
- **A Day in the Life**

Mental & Physical Prep

You can't imagine what your life will be like, while working at one of Amazon's fulfillment centers. And yet, the very best tip anyone could give you, is to be prepared.

How can you prepare if you don't know what to prepare for?

I know exactly what you're saying! I was in your shoes during my first Peak Season in 2013. After being hired, we jumped in the RV, showed up and went with the flow. That, to say the least, didn't work out the best for us. We were stressed, hated it and were literally miserable! But it doesn't have to be the same for you. With a little mental and physical preparation- you'll be headed towards a manageable, if not enjoyable Camperforce experience.

Physical Prep:

I want to be clear- I'm not a Doctor, a Nutritionist or even a Health Coach for that matter- but I think it's pretty clear, if you plan on working at Amazon, you need to start exercising and drinking more water than usual, prior to arrival.

I recommend increasing your daily exercise rate gradually over a period of time- that's been discussed and agreed upon with your doctor. You don't want to push yourself too much- but let's just be real... You need a realistic picture of your current state of physical health before you sign on to walk miles upon miles on a daily basis for weeks, if not months at a time.

Mental Prep:

Mental prep is a little more difficult to address. Its more about training yourself to be aware of your surroundings and even your actions. Your new job will require your attention span to last the entire duration of your assigned shift- no day dreaming while walking through the warehouse.

I remember one moment while working in 2013- when my employee badge dropped down onto the conveyor. I immediately stuck two fingers in between the bars and grabbed it- without thinking. I snatched my hand back- and was stunned at my own stupidity. Thankfully I still had all my fingers.

FUN TIP: Memorize the words to your favorite songs!

While walking around all day inside the fulfillment center- I would constantly find myself wanting to sing (inside my head of course.) When I was bored and needed an upbeat tune to get me through the moment- I would rack my brain for lyrics! It was the oddest thing- I couldn't remember the words to any of my favorite songs or even random songs I had just heard on the radio that morning. I was stuck singing the same 1990's hit "This is How We Do It" over and over and over...

Memorize the words to a few songs- for times when you need a pick-me-up!

Dress for Success



This may seem trivial, but if you've never worked in a giant warehouse you probably don't know what wardrobe is appropriate— and more so what is comfortable.

The dress code policy at Amazon is based off of what is safe, not necessarily what is the most comfortable. Things like open toes or healed shoes, strapless tops, long scarves, jewelry, and hoodies with long strings are not appropriate, so don't bother packing them. What you should pack though are sweat-suits, yoga pants, jogging pants and comfortable outdoor type clothing that can be easily layered, which will help accommodate for the various temperatures inside specific areas of the building. You're more than welcome to try jeans, as many people did wear them, but I personally found them too restricting to walk, bend, and squat all day long... Make sure you have a new pair of 'broken in' walking shoes with thick soles. I made the mistake of purchasing thin running shoes, but after the first day when I had to drag my feet across the floor, I realized a thick sole would be more beneficial than cute colors.

Warehouse Wardrobe Essentials:

Tops:

- T-Shirts
- Tank Tops
- Long Sleeves
- Thin Button-up/
Pullover

Bottoms:

- Yoga Pants
- Leggings
- Jeans

Outerwear:

- Light Jacket
- Fleece/Hoodie
- Rain Jacket
- Winter Coat

Feet:

- Sneakers
- Insoles
- Socks

Accessories:

- Hat
- Headbands
- Ponytail Holders
- Clear Fanny Pack
- Umbrella
- Lunch Bag

Meal Planning

A simple meal plan, can save you much anxiety while working at Amazon. All you need is a blank template, that provides space for Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner & a Snack for each day of the week. A shopping list for the items needed for your meals, as well as recipes, if you need them, will add to the ease of meal prep & organization. Check the Resources in Part 5 for Free Printables!)

Breakfast:

It is the most important meal of the day. We love our fair share of sausage, bacon, pancakes and waffles, but we also love healthier morning meals like warm bowls of oatmeal, Greek yogurt and fruit salad.

Breakfast can be the easiest meal of the day, with a little planning and prep. This time around we chose our breakfast meals based on convenience. I wanted Antwon to be able to catch some extra sleep time, so I purposely chose things that our older girls would be able to pitch in and prepare for themselves and the twins.

Lunch:

Afternoons are full of life. They creep up quickly after morning meals, school work and chores– so planning a few ‘go-to meals’ for lunch is essential to smooth sailing. Sandwiches, Wraps, Salads, and Soups are all classic lunch meals that work great in the RV. They also happen to be relatively easy to prepare and clean up, making them our top choices.



Dinner:

Dinner was always an issue for us in 2013. We were rarely prepared with either an idea of necessary ingredients– which stressed me out upon returning home after a long day of work. We learned from this tough lesson... During the work week, our dinners are one of two things; either a crock pot meal or foil packet. Crock pot meals are thrown in right after breakfast, and foil packets are put together mid-afternoon. Both methods saved us time and energy, but most importantly they allowed us to worry less about what’s for dinner and focus more on family life.

Snacks:

This is the easy part. All you’ll need are snack bags and your family’s favorite snacks or an awesome trail mix recipe. Put individual portions into each of the bags– toss them in an easy to reach bucket or basket and let the kids grab them as needed throughout the day or as planned.

A Real Life Saver

Okay, I know that sounds crazy, but I'm serious. I can't imagine what our days, nights and just life in general would have been like if I hadn't taken the time to plan out a few weeks worth of meals prior to arrival. (Wait! Yes I can... It looks like 2013!)

One of the toughest parts of our experience were meal times.

I personally felt guilty being at work all day, leaving the Hubby at home with the kids to cook breakfast, lunch and dinner. It was really a lot to ask of someone who also needed to make sure to get enough sleep to work a 10 hour shift on the overnight, take care of the kids and make sure they completed their school lessons.

*What we were thinking? We really just didn't have anything to go off of, I guess. The information we received from other campers didn't help at all. They didn't have kids and were not working opposite shifts. So we did what we always did... we winged it. We showed up with the idea that we'd both work, Antwon would feed the kids during the day and Mom would make dinner at night. Pretty easy, right? **Wrong!***

This created so much stress on both Antwon and myself. He was miserable, to say the least. He wasn't getting enough sleep, he was having to prep meals, make meals, and then clean up from the meals. The girls were a little help, but not much they were only 9 and 5. How much help could they possibly offer?

We knew we had underestimated the harsh reality that was Camperforce. We knew, the next time around, if there was a next time, we would plan our meals out for at least 2 weeks, probably more...

So before arriving in 2015, we made sure to do our due diligence! We made plans for use during the work week as well as ones for the weekends- when we were both off. We purchased our supplies ahead of time, during an errand trip so that everything we needed was on hand. During the week, when convenience was key, we made crockpot meals and foil packets- which were easiest and required the least amount of time and effort. On the weekends, we always used the campfire- and had fun cooking and hanging out at our site after the chores were done.



The graphic is titled "CAMPFIRE CAVEMAN" and includes the subtitle "Recipes, Plans & Guides for cooking Your Family's Meal around the Campfire...". It is divided into three main sections: "FRIDAY NIGHT RECIPES", "SATURDAY RECIPES", and "SUNDAY RECIPES". To the right of these sections is a "MEAL PLAN" section with "ON HAND SUPPLIES" and a "SHOPPING LIST". A cartoon caveman character is positioned at the bottom right of the graphic.

CAMPFIRE CAVEMAN
Recipes, Plans & Guides for cooking Your Family's Meal around the Campfire...

FRIDAY NIGHT RECIPES

- Breakfast Burritos
- Roasted Sweet Potato Sliders
- D.I.Y. Campfire Weenie Roast
- Monster S'mores with Hot Chocolate

SATURDAY RECIPES

- Campfire Caveman Breakfast Skillet
- Chicken & Zucchini Campfire Quesadillas
- D.I.Y. Campfire Bake Potato Buffet Bar w/ Maple Baked Beans

SUNDAY RECIPES

- Campfire Bacon with Buttermilk Biscuits
- Honey Ham & Cheese Campfire Paninis
- Beef Fajita Foil Packets

MEAL PLAN

ON HAND SUPPLIES

- FOIL
- BAKEBEANS
- BISCUITS
- BREAKFAST SAUSAGE

SHOPPING LIST

- Soft Flour Tortillas
- Slider Buns
- Graham Crackers
- Zucchini
- Chicken Breast
- @ Sweet Potatoes
- Bacon
- Eggs
- Baking Potatoes
- Fajita Beef
- Onions
- Bell Peppers
- Shredded Cheese

Life Outside the FC

Daily life will go on, regardless of if you're working at Amazon or not. So you might as well prepare for it, especially if you plan on having a good time. Small tasks like doing a load of laundry, buying toothpaste and taking the kids to the movies can quickly become insurmountable jobs, requiring your precious time and energy. Managing your time, can make or break a good day and let's just say it can turn that good day into a bad day in the blink of an eye. Laundry, Cleaning & Running Errands were three areas we had to prepare for.

Laundry: While working in Campbellsville, we realized pretty quickly that while other campers who may be traveling alone or with a single companion, could easily pop a load into the campground washing machine after a long day of work, this wouldn't be the case for our family. With 6 people and a minimum of 3 loads a week, we found using the local laundry mat was our best option. The machines were large, clean, and well maintained. The prices were very affordable and it's convenient location across from the nail shop and Kroger, allowed me to drive back and forth to grab last minute items and get a quick mani/pedi while loads were finishing up!



Cleaning: We cleaned our RV daily, to keep clutter to a minimum, but right now I'm talking about a deep clean. When you have 6 people living in an RV, you just can't underestimate the worth of a good deep cleaning. We saved this for our off days, of course. Mopping the floors, scrubbing the countertops, disinfecting toys, and cleaning our the cabinets and refrigerator – were tasks that needed to be done regularly to keep organized.

Cleaning on a routine– allowed us to maintain a clutter free RV, which made living in it more enjoyable for everyone.

Errands: Armed with a detailed list, categorized by departments, of everything from grocery items, to toiletries, and alcohol, a few hours was more than enough to get everything we needed for the upcoming week. Running errands can easily be done altogether or broken up between loads of laundry– if all facilities are relatively close together.

Divide & Conquer

We knew we didn't want to use all our time off– running around town and found it helpful to allocate one of our two off days to complete all three tasks. Splitting up the work, by having one partner stay home to get the cleaning jobs done, while the other went into town to do laundry and errands, was very efficient.

We needed to get the jobs done– but we wanted to make sure to do it in the least amount of time possible, to ensure the majority of our time off was spent enjoying time together with the kids... and resting!!!

A Day in the Life

Typical days around the campground will vary, of course, and once you add working 10.5 hours a day 4-5 days a week on opposite shifts into the mix— those typical days are bound to be shaken up a bit. Everyone's routine will need to shift to accommodate the new work schedules, school lessons, and just ordinary things like sleeping. We found it best that everyone knew what the days looked like on paper. Having a schedule, regardless of if we always stuck to it or not, helped us keep our sanity and things running smooth inside the camper.

My schedule looked pretty normal, as did the kids, and we didn't really need to make many changes to fit into the Camperforce life, but Antwon's schedule as you can see below— was quite a bit different than any of us were used to.

On most mornings, I'd wake up to talk with my husband before getting out of bed and preparing to go to work. This meant waking up around 4:30am when he arrived back at our camper from his shift. We spent this time catching up on the days events— and to brief each other on important family matters and things that may have happened with the kids. (We also used a Shift Summary Sheet to catch each other up on what happened during the day.) As he drifted off to sleep, I got dressed and ate my breakfast then left for the day.

While I worked all day, family life continued in my absence. Antwon would sleep for a few hours in the morning before waking up to clean up after breakfast, and start dinner in the crockpot, before helping the Twins get started with their lessons. Around 12 he would take an afternoon nap with the Twins, to get a few more hours of rest, while the Girls read books and finished their assignment for the day. After the kids headed outside to play, Antwon had a few hours to relax, take a shower, straighten up and get ready for his shift.

Limited Interactions

After so much turmoil centered around our shift change, back in 2013, this year we decided to carpool. I teamed up with another family Workamper®, in our campground, working opposite shifts with his wife and shared a carpool.

Each day as we returned from our shift, upon entering the campground we would keep our eyes peeled for our partners vehicles (aka Sightseeing). Once a partner was spotted— we'd quickly throw up our right hand to give a Visual High-5.

This consisted of seeing your significant other through the window of your vehicle and theirs, and throwing your hand up to wave Hello & Good-bye as your two cars passed without hesitation...

Sightseeing & Visual High-5s were both odd and funny during the beginning stages when you could look forward to your 3 days off and hoped for voluntary time off— but as the Peak Season arrived they were the only interactions with your spouse you had during the workweek, especially if you chose not to wake up at 4:30am to spend a few moments together.

Sharee

- 04:30am- Chit Chat w/ Antwon
- 05:00am- Rise & Shine
- 05:30am- Oatmeal & Coffee
- 06:00am- Leave for work
- 06:30am- Day shift starts
- 09:00am- 1st Break
- 11:00am- Lunch @ Amazon
- 11:30am- Back to Work
- 02:00pm- 2nd Break
- 05:00pm- Clocking Out
- 05:30pm- Hugs & Kisses
- 06:00pm- Showers
- 06:30pm- Dinner is Served
- 07:30pm- Board Games & Cards
- 08:30pm- Bed Time Stories
- 09:00pm- Lights Out
- 09:30pm- Mom Time

Antwon

- 04:30am- Chit Chat w/ Sharee
- 05:00am- Heading to Sleep
- 10:00am- Breakfast Clean Up
- 10:30am- Lessons w/ the Twins
- 11:00am- Start Crock Pot Meal
- 12:00pm- Nap Time
- 01:30pm- Lunch Time
- 02:00pm- Outside Time
- 02:30pm- Clean Up
- 03:30pm- Shower
- 04:30pm- Hugs & Kisses
- 05:00pm- Leaving for Work
- 05:30pm- Clocking In
- 07:30pm- 1st Break
- 11:30pm- Lunch @ Amazon
- 01:30pm- 2nd Break
- 04:00am- Clocking Out

Kids

- 09:00am- Rise & Shine
- 10:00am- Easy Breakfast Meal
- 10:30am- School Work Starts
- 12:00pm- Nap & Reading Time
- 01:30pm- Lunch Time
- 02:00pm- Outside Time
- 04:30pm- Dad's Hugs & Kisses
- 05:00pm- Hanging Out Inside
- 05:30pm- Mom's Hugs & Kisses
- 06:00pm- Showers
- 06:30pm- Dinner is Served
- 07:30pm- Board Games & Cards
- 08:30pm- Bed Time Stories
- 09:00pm- Lights Out



RESOURCES

- Meal Planner
- Shopping & Errands
- Shift Summary

- Daily Schedule
- Weekly Schedule
- Location Bucket List



4 Day Work Week Meal Plan

DAY & NOTES	BREAK FAST	LUNCH	DINNER	SNACK
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DAY 1:	CINNAMON WAFFLES	CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP	BROCCOLI & CHEESE CASSEROLE	ANTS ON A LOG
	Cinnamon Waffles	Chicken Noodle Soup	Chopped Broccoli	Celery Sticks
	Maple Syrup	Crackers	Shredded Cheese	Nut Butter
			Broccoli & Cheese Rice	Raisins
			Cream of Onion Soup	

DAY 2:	SAUSAGE & HASH	PB & J + BANANA	CHICKEN & BRUSSELS	SLICED APPLES & GRANOLA BARS
	Diced Potatoes	Peanut Butter	Chicken Thighs	Sliced Apples
	Chopped Sausage	Jelly	Brussel Sprouts	Granola Bars
	Diced Tomatoes	Bread	Sliced Red Onion	
	Frozen Stir Fry Mix	Sliced Banana	Seasoning	

DAY 3:	SUNRISE BURRITOS	CRANBERRY APPLE SALAD	SHRIMP FAJITAS	BANANA & STRING CHEESE
	Hashbrowns	Mixed Greens	Peeled Shrimp	Banana
	Sausage or Bacon	Sliced Apples	Sliced Bell Pepper	String Cheese
	Scrambled Eggs	Dried Cranberries	Sliced onion	
	Shredded Cheese	Blue Cheese	Tortillas	
		Vinaigrette	Fajita Seasoning	

DAY 4:	PARFAIT	CHICKEN CEASAR SALAD	PIZZA & BREADSTICKS	GOODY BAGS
	Flavored Yogurt	Diced Chicken	Frozen Pizzas	Pretzel Sticks
	Granola	Romaine Lettuce	Breadsticks	Chocolate Chips
	Sliced Strawberries	Parmesan Cheese	Marinara Sauce	Mini Marshmallows
		Croutons		Raisins
		Caesar Dressing		Sliced Almonds

Meal Plan Notes:

4 Day Work Week Meal Plan

DAY & NOTES	BREAK FAST	LUNCH	DINNER	SNACK
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DAY 1:	BAGELS & CREAM CHEESE	TOASTED BLT	SAUSAGE & PEPPERS	CARROT DIPPERS
	Assorted Bagels	Toasted Bread	Italian Sausage	Carrot Sticks
	Cream Cheese	Pre-Cooked Bacon	Sliced Yellow Pepper	Ranch Dressing
		Lettuce	Sliced Red Pepper	
		Sliced Tomato	Slice Onion	
			Hoagie Bun	

DAY 2:	B.E.C. CROISSANT	TOMATO SOUP	NACHOES	APPLE SANDWICHES
	Croissants	Tomato Soup	Tortilla Chips	Sliced & Cored Apples
	Bacon	Toasted Bred	Seasoned Ground Beef	Nut Butter
	Egg	Coconut Oil	Shredded Cheese	
	Chees		Salsa	
			Shredded Lettuce	

DAY 3:	HONEY NUT CHEERIOS	SLICED TURKEY	PEELED POTATOES	ALMOND
	Milk	Sliced Baby Swiss	Chili Beans	Cranberry
	Strawberries	Red pepper Hummus	Shredded Cheese	Cashew
		Bread	Sour Cream	

DAY 4:	SAUSAGE BISCUIT	LUNCH BOXES	CROCKPOT ZITI	WATERMELON BOWL
	Sausage	Thick Cut Deli Ham	Penne Pasta	Chopped Watermelon
	Frozen Biscuits	Thick Cut Cheddar	Garlic Basil Sauce	Sliced Bananas
	Jelly	Salted Crackers	Ground Beef	Honey
		Oreos	Ricotta	
		Capri Suns	Mozzarella Cheese	

Meal Plan Notes:

4 Day Work Week Meal Plan

DAY & NOTES	BREAK FAST	LUNCH	DINNER	SNACK
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DAY 1:				

DAY 2:				

DAY 3:				

DAY 4:				

Meal Plan Notes:

5 Day Work Week Meal Plan

DAY & NOTES	BREAK FAST	LUNCH	DINNER	SNACK
------------------------	-------------------	--------------	---------------	--------------

DAY 1:				

DAY 2:				

DAY 3:				

DAY 4:				

DAY 5:				

Shopping & Errands

-To Do List-

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
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- 11.
- 12.

-Notes-

Protein:

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Vegetables:

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Fruits:

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Dairy:

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Pantry:

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Bread:

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Spices:

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Toiletries:

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Household:

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Weekly Schedule

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

NOTES

Location Bucket List

Restaurant	Shop	Place	Museum
Thing	Event	Park	Person
Treat	Activity	Music	Show

I WENT

I SAW

I DID

I RECOMMEND

In Conclusion

So there you have it– My Guide to Camperforce. How to plan and prepare!

We've gone through the entire experience from start to finish and pretty much every step of the way in between. I hope you've enjoyed the information I've provided here and I also hope it helps you Plan & Prepare for your Camperforce Season.

Additional resources, stories from our experiences, and general information can be found online at

MeettheColliers.com

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