The Best Cottage Checklist: a Momâ€™s Guide by

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Families are forever fearful of unknowns. When you rent a cottage, you are dealing with independent owners who may just ignore your complaints and concerns. Finding the right cottage rental, in many ways, is like shopping for your next car. You need to take it for a test drive, but you never really know how it will work out until you actually buy it and live in it for a while to truly get the full experience. What happens if you live far away and seeing it in advance is just not possible? How can you be expected to plop down hundreds of dollars for a deposit, or pay in full if you havenâ€™t been to it, seen it up close?

Here are some helpful hints into a pragmatic approach to finding the right place for your family, what to do, and how to search:

1. Price: if you want cheap, thatâ€™s exactly what you get. The cottage that is less than a â€œNO TELL motel is likely going to be scarier than the campsite in the middle of the bush. DO NOT SHOP based on the old mighty dollar. Be realistic. Have a budget that is fair.

2. LOCATION-LOCATION-LOCATION. Just like in real estate, do your homework; find out whatâ€™s in the area.

3. Make your own list of â€œwantsâ€• and â€œneedsâ€•. Wants are part of your wish list and may or may available for your budget: beach on property, southern exposure, hot tub, linens. Needs are the essentials: hydro, running water, number of beds, indoor bathroom.

4. Ask for pictures INSIDE the dwelling as well as OUTSIDE the property. Photography is so amazing in this day and age.

5. Ask all your questions up front, and keep asking. Most will not mind.

6. Always have a contract in writing, do not ever pay for something without getting all the terms and conditions up front. Legitimate business owners usually want to protect themselves as well and will have receipts and proper paperwork.

7. If possible meet the owner in person. Face to face meetings will generally help in easing your concerns

8. Damage Deposit: yes it is necessary. You swipe your credit card at a hotel for amenities right? Same idea with cottage rentals. It gives the owner something to fall back on if you break something or something goes missing.

9. Motorised boats, included or not. ABSOLUTELY NOT! What a lot of people do not realise is that the insurance and traffic laws in their province or state prohibit this. In Ontario, for example, the person who is going to drive a boat with an engine MUST be licensed (boaterâ€™s license) AND insured to do so.

10. Ask for references. A repeat guest is a good advertiser, and if the cottage is nice and clean it usually can provide for references.

11. Fishing and Hunting Laws: learn them if you intend to fish and hunt. There are a lot of protected areas in the province or state you are looking at for your vacation rental. In Ontario, for example, if

you are above the age of 18, and are caught fishing without a license, the laws or so strict, they could take your boat used to fish in, the pole, and even possibly the truck or car you drove in to the lake with to fish!

12. Bears and Wildlife: not friendly. Never mind what some activists tell you. DONâ€™T FEED THE BEARS. Stay on top of your trash and donâ€™t leave it out.

13. Campfires, fires and smoking are a huge safety hazard. Always be prepared for the worst. Bring a bucket with you and keep it full of water close to the fire or the smoker. Dry weather conditions usually is the worst time of year to host fires, and you should refer to the Campfire Safety Board in the area to see if it is permitted.

14. Be polite and respectful to the community. If thereâ€™s a lake, the noise you make will carry. And if there are kids, there is noise. 11 pm is generally a standard time to shut off the music, or lower your loud voices to a whisper. Remember you are a guest.

15. Firewood: included or not? Most times itâ€™s not included. Itâ€™s expensive and itâ€™s extra main for the owner. It is wise to ask for an axe, but smarter to always bring your own. You can usually find it locally and inquire as to where to buy it, average cost. DO NOT CHOP DOWN ANYTHING!!!

16. Housekeeping Cottage? That basically means YOU do your own cooking and the basic infrastructure is provided for such a vacation: utensils, dish/flatware, pots, etc. But you bring your own linens, your own food and toiletries. Itâ€™s also recommended to ask if there are cleaning supplies, or if those too are items you should bring. Itâ€™s not a hotel. So be prepared.

The best cottage rental checklist is of course, the one you create for you and your family, based on your own individual requirements. My list is helpful but does not cover everything, and that should be noted. It also does not provide a guarantee that should you follow these hints you will be guaranteed to have the best cottage. That will depend on your ultimate choice, the weather, and you and your familyâ€™s outlook. Above all, be prepared, be smart, be safe, and love nature!

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Articles writer for vacation rental site CottageMe.com that advertises vacation rental properties - cottages, condos, vacation rental homes, villas, cabins and B&B from Owners and Management companies. They offers the ultimate variety in a cottage rental and vacation home rentals from Canada, USA, Mexico and Caribbean. These areas include the popular Collingwood, Muskoka, Haliburton, Kawartha, Northern Ontario, Laurentides, Mont Tremblant, Florida, Orlando regions. This site is not a broker - for inquiries on a rent cottage or homes travelers need to contact directly the individual owners or managers either by phone or by email. Web site's goal is to help you find the best vacation place to meet your demanding needs completely free.

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