

I have been fortunate enough to grow up in Maine, leave, and return. Throughout this time, one place has always been my fortress of solitude, and that is camp. Camp is located in Wesley, Maine. What makes camp particularly important for me are three things; the drive, the camp itself, and the mind state one finds themselves in upon arriving.

What I love most about this is you have two options on how to arrive at this location. One, take the tarmac. Route 9, the Airline as they call it. The trip itself is 2 hours, very hilly, with lots of turns. Evolved over time, it used to be narrow, and what one would envision a Maine road to look like. Potholes deeper than your rich neighbor in Florida's swimming pool, patches of the tarmac missing entirely, curves you cannot see around. Over my life, they have expanded this road immensely, including rest stops, and pavement that could actually be called such. This is the road to not take. What I have loved since my childhood is the Studmill road. This is the road that lacks pavement, signs, any sign of human life aside from the fact it is a road. Instead of two hours of pavement, signs, cell phone service, you get an hour and a half of nothing but the sounds of nature, your vehicle, and music of choice. I specifically acquired a vehicle capable of this route, and that is my jeep. What makes it more incredible is that in the summer, I remove the top, put on some bougie sunglasses, and drive slow the whole way, blasting whatever music pulls at my heart strings at the time. The trip - the adventure getting to camp - is just the beginning of the overall camp experience.

Upon arriving, dust covered, maybe mud depending on season - you see the lake. The cabin rests above the peaceful water on the shoreline. Camp is probably described at this point in the human timeline of history as "rustic" or "off the grid". At camp there is no cell service, no way to get in touch with anyone, except for yourself and those you deem special enough to be there. No electricity, no toilet (we have an outhouse close enough!) no current amenities that flood my life at home. The only part of the camp that is insulated is the lake side, so depending on season - you are at the mercy of your fire building skills via woodstove to keep warm. Just as important, this woodstove is your means of cooking. All meat consumed and leftover is thrown into beans on the morning of my departure. The cabin itself has not evolved much over time, nor finished on the inside. The outside walls that have shingles on the exterior are the only things keeping one from the elements. Propane lights are mounted in each corner of the camp to provide light in the evening. One of my favorite items in the cabin is the old radio. I can forever remember sitting at the table at night, Papa toking off his pipe listening to the sounds of NPR. I still do this to this day, with my long now passed Papa's pipe. The items from the past within the cabin are as much of a part of it as the building itself.

What is best and my most favorite about camp, is that no one can get ahold of me. I use this time to reflect upon my past week, unwind, let go of anything pressing me. I brain dump all things and just live in the now, the present. I build a fire outside, and sit by it, looking out to the water of where I have swam for 25 years at least. I use this time to stay on an even keel for the week forward. I have talked at length to a few of my Directors at work about the importance of having a place like this for one's mental health. To be able to work as hard as we do, it is important to have a place to do nothing. To transition your brain from budget analysis and policy and procedure development to what time is too early to pour a drink (never, who are we kidding its camp!). One can not feel calm and serenity like one particularly drunk individual by a camp fire in the northern Maine woods.

For me, camp is just like what every superhero needs; a fortress of solitude. It requires an adventure worth remembering to get there, full of sights and sounds to absorb. Upon arriving, the visual amenities provided and lack of modern day amenities outright are delightful. To close it out though, it is the state of mind. The heightened sense of awareness of where you are, being able to take it all in. Sitting in your chair, drink in hand, and next to nothing floating through your mind. This is camp.