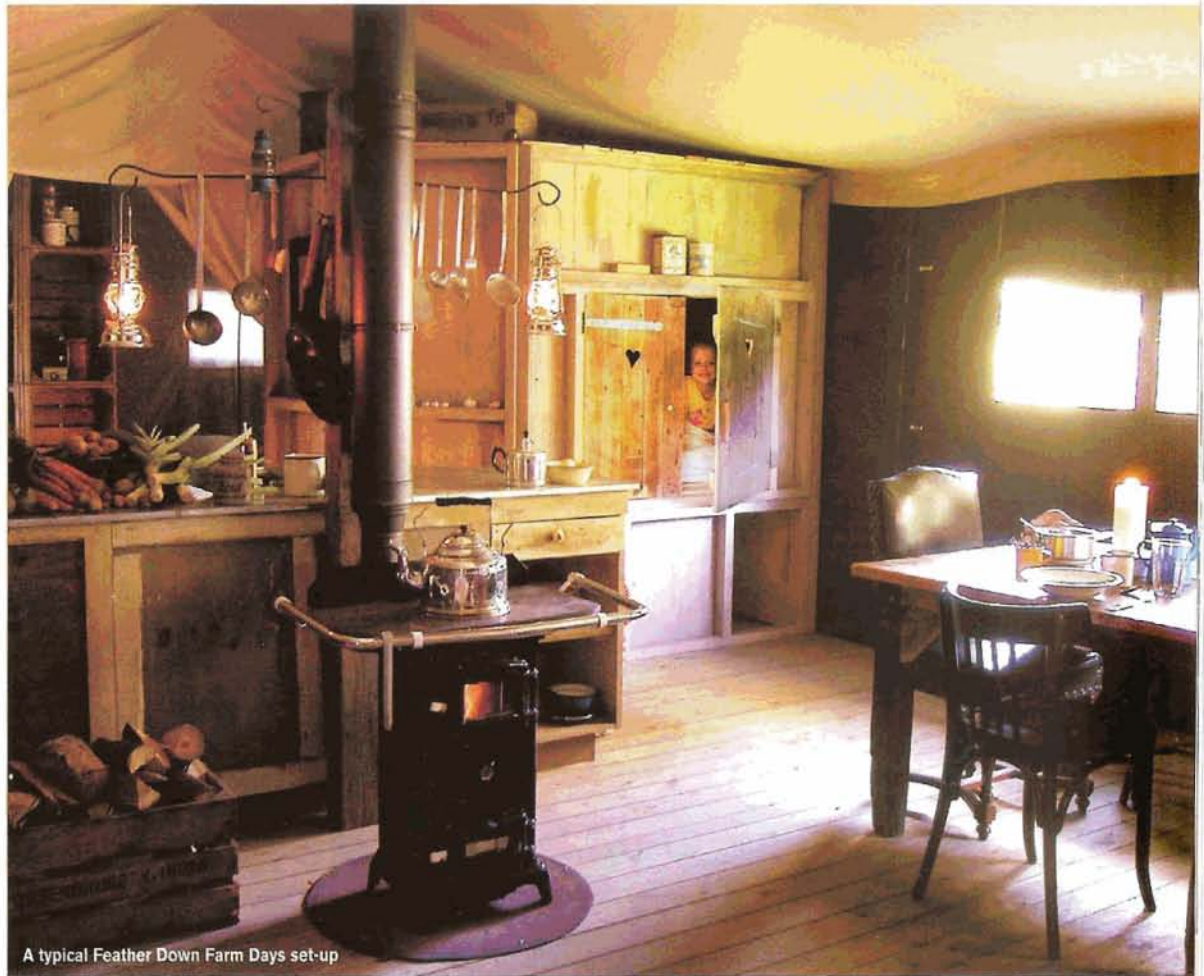


countryside, Blackberry Wood should manage to edge its way into even the most truculent of teen's affections. With only 20 pitches, it also houses the infamous Holiday Bus (yes, you can stay inside), plus retro and gypsy caravans so there's always the option of turning up tentless. Loo and hot-shower facilities are good and the approach is relaxed – barbecues are encouraged, and the only restriction is a no-noise policy between 11pm and 7am. With emphatic thumbs-up from visitors, this campsite could prove the perfect destination for long-suffering teenagers (not to mention their parents) who need to take a break from it all. **50 minutes from Tunbridge Wells; tents: £5, adults £9, children £12 (peak prices), 01273 890035, www.blackberrywood.com**

7 Great for first-timers:

Manor Court Farm, Ashurst

Its proximity to Tunbridge Wells makes this little campsite a great place in which either to trial-run camping, or to 'test-drive' a new tent, as you can always scurry back home if plans go awry. Assuming they don't, though, this campsite has a relaxed atmosphere, with new loo and shower facilities, recycling points, and lovely views across the Medway valley. In the daytime, be a tourist on your own turf and visit Hever Castle (www.hevercastle.co.uk) or Groombridge Place (www.groombridge.co.uk), then toast sausages over a camp fire in the evening. Alternatively, take the twenty-minute walk into Groombridge, with its choice of pubs. And if the weather turns nasty but you're reluctant to call it a day, compromise by checking into the farmhouse's b&b. **15 minutes' drive from Tunbridge Wells; adults £8, child reductions, 01892 525901, www.manorcourtfarm.co.uk**



A typical Feather Down Farm Days set-up

Don't want to pitch your own tent but fancy a 'rough-and-ready' trip to the country? Try these:

BRENLEY FARM: the shared experience...

Brenley Farm is a working farm outside Faversham. Its pretty Georgian bunk house can hold up to 24, has two shower rooms and a spacious kitchen, making it a great option for families who fancy a weekend away en masse.

An hour from Tunbridge Wells; £12.50 per person.(bring your own sleeping bag), 01227 751203, www.brenley-farm.co.uk

FEATHER DOWN FARM DAYS: the vintage experience...

Lunsford Farm in East Sussex is just one of several local farms playing host to the Feather Down concept: spacious tents, featuring wood-burning stoves and a loo and shower, but no electricity. Children love it.

50 minutes from Tunbridge Wells; up to £275 for weekend stay, 01420 80804, www.featherdown.co.uk

FAIR OAK FARM: for the gypsy in your soul...

With a real gypsy caravan incorporated in the Grain Store, this trip will be the best of both worlds and a whole lot of luxury. Coming soon are eco tree-houses for all you Green Glampers. An absolutely stunning location to stay in.

25 minutes from Tunbridge Wells; up to £520 per week, 01435 884122, www.fairoakfarm.co.uk

Top tips for campers, by campers:

Carolyn Scholes of Langton Green has the following advice:

- ▲ Buy a waterproof tent and find the flattest pitch possible.
- ▲ Bring plenty of board games, a football and cricket bats.
- ▲ If you're stuck in a downpour and your tent's flooding, it's not the time to be proud – rather, it's time to go home!

Nine-year-old veteran campers, Conor and Hannah, add:

- ▲ Pack cocoa and marshmallows for a bed-time treat.

Striped tipi, £65, Cath Kidston, 01892 521197

