

SPRING TRAVEL

Sometimes parents need just a little peace. I found mine in a tiny cabin.

How I escaped my husband's living room Zoom calls, the meltdowns of my first-grader and preschooler, and the dog barking for a blissful weekend in New Hampshire.

By **Aprill Brandon** Updated March 18, 2022, 8:18 a.m.



A cabin at Getaway. MICHELLE WATT/© 2018 MICHELLE WATT

I like nature. I believe we should love it, celebrate it, protect it, get back to it as much as we can.

In theory.

In reality, nature is full of creatures great and small that have very little regard for my personal comfort. Nature is also full of weather, which has proven time and again it cares little for my feelings about it.

Toward the end of 2020, however, I was looking for any escape — even if it was in the great outdoors. I needed to get away. Away from my husband's living room Zoom calls, the meltdowns of my first-grader and preschooler, the dog barking at our 82-year-old neighbor who had the audacity to putter around his own yard. Away from the endless depressing news cycle and the pressures of living and parenting in the COVID era. I needed to go somewhere in nature, back to my natural state. Because the natural state of a woman cannot be a constantly anxious swamp witch who is always yelling, which is what I had slowly morphed into since the day everyone came home and never left again.

My husband agreed.

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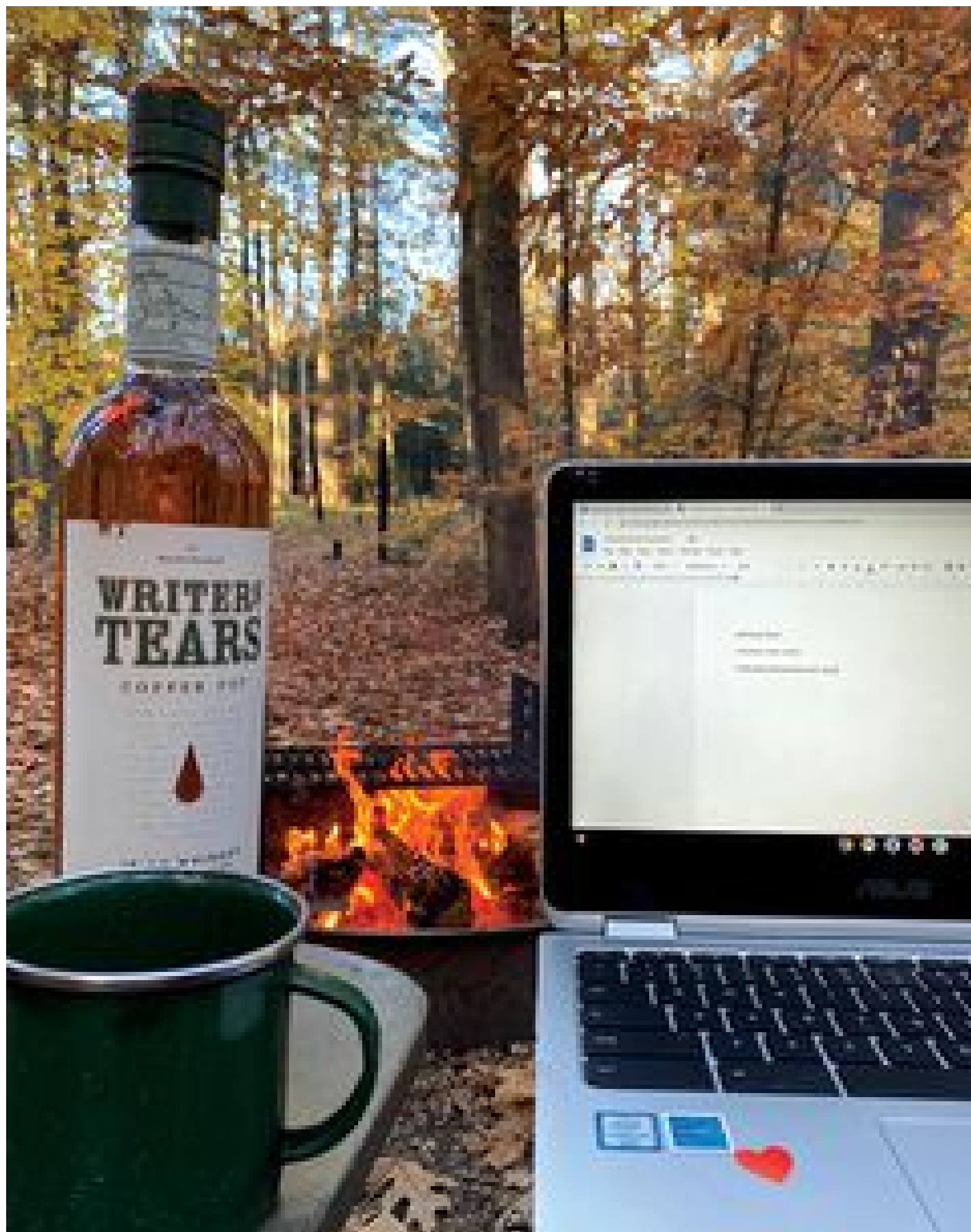
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My children agreed

My children agreed.

Our downstairs neighbors and their ceiling-banging broom agreed.





A few of the writer's necessities at her outdoor escape. APRILL BRANDON

The solution for my getaway, it turned out, was Getaway (getaway.house, 617-914-0021). Originally launched in 2015 as a Cambridge startup, the company has grown in popularity thanks to its tiny, modern cabins nestled among scenic rural landscapes. Getaway has outposts sprinkled throughout the country, promising to provide everything you need and nothing you don't. Luckily, we had similar ideas of what I needed, such as a big, comfortable bed, a working stove, and an indoor flushing toilet that I did not have to share with anyone.

The closest outpost to Boston was in Epsom, New Hampshire, about an hour and 20-minute drive from my home in Somerville. I pulled up to my cabin on a late October afternoon, immediately enchanted by the sight of a fire pit surrounded by Adirondack chairs and a picnic table. There were other cabins in view, yet far enough away that I felt alone without feeling isolated.

But it was the inside that took my breath away. A floor-to-ceiling window beside the bed allowed in a warm glow of sunlight. The cabin was small, as advertised, but cleverly designed to make the space seem larger than it was. Even better, it was perfectly empty. I don't mean that in the negative sense — but strictly in the beautiful, beautiful unoccupied sense.

It was all mine. Just mine. For the next few days, at least.

I'd like to tell you that I immediately took advantage of this solo vacation my family had generously gifted me and did something fun. But I didn't. I simply sat down and stared vacantly out the window, willing the quiet and the emptiness to soak into my pores.

Some unknown time later, I felt I should at least try to get into the adventurous spirit, so I decided to go outside and stare vacantly at a fire. Channeling my strong lady ancestors, I got a Duraflame log roaring with a utility lighter, cracked open a box of wine, and watched the flames. I had brought a book along, and my lantern, too, in case the sudden

urge to write something brilliant hit me. But mostly I just stared and sighed and sipped.

Parenting is hard and exhausting. Parenting in a pandemic is devastating. My husband and I were trying to cope with a world that was growing ever more threatening and constantly shifting by the day, while also trying to help two little people navigate it. We constantly had to make big decisions on their behalf with whatever information we had on hand at the time. All this while trying desperately to keep some small semblance of their childhood innocence alive.

Which is why there was nothing I wanted to do more in that moment than just sit and stare in peace.

The next day I became slightly more ambitious, hiking along an [Epsom Town Forest trail](#), which is a convenient five-minute walk from the outpost. I even managed to reach the top of a high ridge, affording a breathtaking view of the surrounding woods. I found myself laughing from actual joy. On the way back, I passed by two moose. Actual living, breathing moose. I was close enough to them to realize they are beautiful and terrifying and much too big to be roaming around the woods unleashed.

Since that initial trip, I've returned every so often to those cozy little cabins in the woods. I read, I write, I stare. I make cheeseburgers for breakfast. I explore the trails at the nearby [Bear Brook State Park](#) and grab a beer at the local [Blasty Bough Brewing Co.](#) I avoid moose. And each time I come back home, I find I am closer to being myself again.

Even now, with spring on the horizon, the children back in school, and pandemic restrictions beginning to ease, I find I am still feeling the itch to get back out there. It turns out nature can be quite addicting under certain circumstances. Sometimes when it's really quiet, I can hear the call of the wild beckoning me, along with the equally loud siren song of that luxurious fluffy bed beside a giant window showing me all of nature's beauty — but none of her bite.

Plus: 2 More Camp Sites To Visit

Plus: 3 More Glamp Sites to Visit

1. Normandy Farms in Foxborough

[normandyfarms.com](https://www.normandyfarms.com), 866-673-2767

Family-owned and operated since 1971, Normandy Farms offers various glamping options, from cabins to yurts to safari tents, ranging from \$125 a night during off-peak season to \$2,450 weekly rentals in summer. Located on 100 acres of wooded land, amenities such as a 20,000-square-foot recreation lodge, an arcade, indoor and outdoor pools, and a fitness center are offered. “We remain committed to being a renowned pioneer in the glamping industry,” general manager Kristine Daniels says. This year, Normandy Farms added a new pavilion and courtyard with outdoor fire pit, expanded massage services, and an animal barn where guests can visit Nigerian dwarf goats, mini donkeys, and a horse.



The reception tent at Under Canvas Acadia. HANDOUT

2. Under Canvas Acadia in Surry, Maine

undercanvas.com, 888-496-1148

Set on 100 waterfront acres near [Acadia National Park](#), guests can enjoy views of the Maine coastline from posh safari-inspired tents — with private bathrooms — that sleep two to seven people. Prices range from \$399 to \$519 per night. Under Canvas can help you book nearby kayak tours and boat cruises before you arrive, and give tips on hiking trails and other activities once you're there. Guests can also expect a culinary adventure, with a rotating menu made from locally sourced ingredients, including kid-friendly fare.





A cabin at Sandy Pines in Kennebunkport, Maine. DOUGLAS MERRIAM

3. Sandy Pines Campground in Kennebunkport, Maine

sandypinescamping.com, 207-967-2483

Bordered by a salt marsh with a kayak launch, Sandy Pines options include repurposed Airstreams, safari tents, camp cottages, covered wagons, and more. Glamping is growing in popularity since the pandemic drove people to seek wide open spaces, according to vice president of marketing Brenda Darroch. “I thought glamping would primarily attract couples, but we’ve found that families are equally — if not more so — wanting that experience,” she says. Prices range from \$209-\$309 for couples’ glamping tents, while family glamps range from \$259-\$409.

Aprill Brandon is a writer in Somerville. Send comments to magazine@globe.com.

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