

[NEW THIS WEEK]

Hugh Jackman will do anything to get back his daughter who has gone missing in **Prisoners**. List price: \$29 for DVD, \$39 for Blu-ray



Missed **UFC 165** live? Check out the light heavy-weight title fight between Jon "Bones" Jones and Sweden's Alexander "The Mauler" Gustafsson. List price \$20 for DVD.



GEARSCOUT

Hey, cyclists: Does your winter evening commute feel like a rolling bonus round in "Death

Race 2000"? Be seen *and* heard with the **ORP** (\$65) from Torcano Industries.

This colorful, snap-on, handlebar-mounted accessory features two horns to ward off roadkill point-seekers — a 96-decibel horn that the maker says can be heard by drivers inside their cars and a less obnoxious 76-decibel sound to alert pedestrians of your presence. It also serves as an 87-lumen headlight that can flash for more attention. The unit is rechargeable, shockproof and stretches to fit most handlebars. \$65



TOP PAID iOS APPS

iTunes gift card burning a hole in your wallet? Check out some of the top paid apps for iPhone and iPad as of Dec. 16

iPhone: 1. **Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas**; 2. **Heads Up!**; 3. **Traffic Racer**; 4. **Minecraft — Pocket Edition**; 5. **Afterlight**; 6. **PNP — Portable North Pole 2013**; 7. **Angry Birds Star Wars II**; 8. **Santa's Twerk Shop by JibJab**; 9. **Free Music Download Pro**; 10. **Plague Inc.**

iPad: 1. **The Room Two**; 2. **Minecraft — Pocket Edition**; 3. **Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas**; 4. **Toca Lab**; 5. **Angry Birds Star Wars II**; 6. **Assassin's Creed Pirates**; 7. **Cops N Robbers (Jail Break)**; 8. **Heads Up!**; 9. **Ski Safari: Adventure Time**; 10. **Pixel Gun 3D**

By **Jon R. Anderson**
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They were the go-to field tent for Genghis Khan's fabled cavalry as the Mongol hordes conquered Eurasia. These days, yurts are becoming the go-to accommodations for anyone looking to escape the masses and get outdoors — without all the mess and hassle of full-on camping.

That's anyone from alpine skiers and snowshoers looking for rustic no-frills shelter close to the action to those who prefer the increasingly popular "glamping" ("glamour camping") offering up more resort-style amenities.

Whichever the style, most yurts are basically the same — circular, domed tents about 20 to 30 feet in diameter. First used by the nomads of Central Asia more than 2,000 years ago, yurts still serve as homes for thousands of modern-day Mongolians.

These days, most yurts used for camping have at least plywood floors, canvas-and-lattice side-walls and a skylight, and are typically equipped with at least beds, chairs, a table and cooking equipment. The higher-end yurts can rival fancy hotel suites.

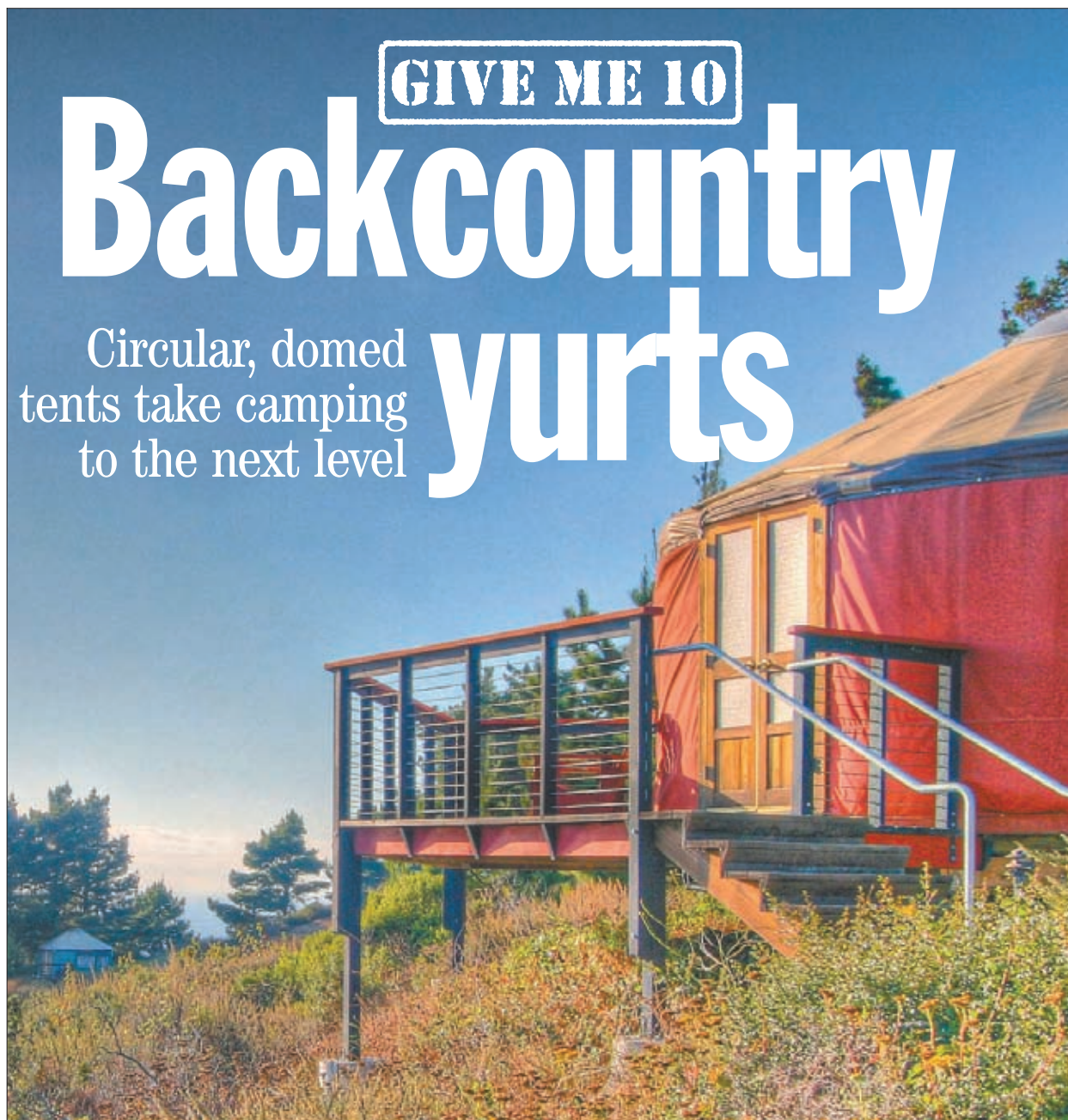
For Air Force veteran Mae Sinclair-Healy and her active-duty Marine husband Sgt. Kevin Healy, the whole idea of beds in the great outdoors — much less fancy camping — seemed a little lame, at first.

"Since I was a kid growing up in Maine, we always did back-pack-in, deep-in-the-woods camping. We never even went to campgrounds," Mae says. But with three kids younger than 5, that was impractical.

When Maine Forest Yurts opened up for business earlier this year, offering free stays for all active-duty troops and veterans, the Healys jumped at the chance.

"It was amazing," Mae says. "It felt more like 'real' camping than I would have ever imagined because it was so secluded."

About half an hour outside of Portland, the 100-acre property



set along a winding lake, with miles of hiking and cross-country skiing trails "just left us feeling immersed in nature. It really was awesome."

And the kids got a great taste of outdoor adventure.

"Yurts really are a great way for families to make that transition into camping," she says. Stationed at Robins Air Force Base, Ga., the mix of comfort and countryside was just what her husband needed to help ease him through the struggles of post-deployment stress.

"Because it's all one big room, it really makes connecting as a family easy," Mae says. "I'd recommend it to anyone."

Somewhere between barebones and high-end luxury glamping, Maine Forest Yurts was opened by Bob Crowley, winner of "Survivor: Gabon" in 2008 at age 57.

"All yurts are unique, but ours comes with an old man who is a storyteller who will tell you all you want to know about 'Survivor,'" the former high school physics teacher says with a laugh.

Offering free stays to troops and veterans, he says, is his way to give back and say thank you to those who serve.

The yurt man

Few people in the U.S. know yurts better than Alan Bair.

He fell in love with their simple, intrinsic beauty entwined with rugged, functional design about 40 years ago, so he built his own yurt in Oregon and lived in it through the mid-70s while working on reforestation projects.

It wasn't long before word got out and requests began to pour in. Today, Bair's Pacific Yurts not only is the original U.S. manufacturer, but it's also one of the biggest, supplying everyone from resorts and state and national parks, to even the military.

If you stay in a yurt, chances are it will be one of Bair's.

Over the years, he's added plenty of improvements, while



COURTESY OF TREEBONES RESORT

Genghis Khan never had it so good. Yurt camping at Treebones Resort in Big Sur, Calif., has come a long way since the Mongol invasions. At right is an interior view of one of the resort's yurts.

staying true to same basic design used by Central Asian nomads for thousands of years.

"The traditional yurt's encircling rope or woven tension bands are now a steel aircraft cable sitting neatly on top of the lattice wall," he says, while the latest in modern architectural fabrics have "replaced the outer covering of felted wool or canvas, and NASA-developed insulation provides lightweight but effective



COURTESY OF PACIFIC YURTS



temperature control."

Some of Bair's favorite yurt getaways:

1. Orca Island Cabins, Alaska

Comfortable "off-grid" rental yurts located on a small private island in Resurrection Bay, just nine miles from Seward. Rates start at \$239 per person per night and include round-trip water taxi to Orca Island, use of kayaks, rowing skiffs and stand-up paddle boards, fishing gear, binoculars and firewood.

2. Cliffside Park, Wash.

Yurt rentals for active-duty and retired service members and their families on beautiful Whid-

bey Island. Overlooking the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Olympic Peninsula, this Navy-run campsite offers six furnished 16-foot yurts with twin-over-queen bunk beds and a full-size futon. Rates: \$25 per night in summer/\$20 per night in winter.

3. Oregon State Parks

"Yurt rentals are scattered throughout the state, but the majority are ... along the beautiful Oregon coastline," Bair says. With more than a dozen campgrounds now offering yurts, you can choose from rustic rentals situated near a central bathroom or deluxe yurts with in-

Yurt camping ranges from barebones accommodations to high-end luxury possibilities. The yurts at Orca Island Cabins, above, on a private island in Alaska, fall somewhere in the middle with queen-sized beds and fully equipped, solar-powered kitchens.

kitchens and bathrooms. With its sandy beaches and towering sea cliffs, eight-person rustic yurts at Sunset Bay, for example, range from \$36 to \$50 per night.

4. Treebones Resort, Calif.

This 16-yurt resort includes "comfortable accommodations perched on Big Sur hillside with breathtaking ocean views," Bair says. Enjoy the heated pool and outdoor sushi bar. An ocean-view yurt for two with a queen-sized bed starts at \$255 per night and includes a breakfast buffet and morning yoga classes. All yurts are located near a central bathroom.

5. Fort Tuthill Recreation Area, Ariz.

Near Flagstaff and operated by Luke Air Force Base, Fort Tuthill is the perfect launching pad for a slew of outdoor adventures that range from whitewater rafting to skiing and snowshoeing. Yurts include two twin bunk beds, a wood-burning stove, as

well as a refrigerator and microwave. Take in the views from each yurt's large deck. Rates: \$25 per night in winter, \$50 per night in summer.

6. Summit Mountain Lodge, Utah

A secluded luxury venue, the lodge offers 14 tastefully decorated yurts in southern Utah near several major skiing venues. Some include bathrooms, while others share a large bathroom. Rates range from \$75 to \$225 per night. Be sure to ask for the 10 percent military discount.

7. Cypress Valley Canopy Tours, Texas

What Bair describes as "one of the most unique yurt rentals" you'll likely find, these accommodations are built high in a Cypress tree and accessed by suspension bridge. You'll have your own private bathhouse with a waterfall-filled tub that overlooks the ravine below. Located near Spicewood, Texas, overnights for two adults start at \$300.

8. Maine Forest Yurts, Maine

Located 30 minutes from Portland, this 100-acre wilderness property includes comfortably furnished yurt rentals and plenty of tent sites. Best yet, stays are free for all active-duty service members and veterans.

9. Savage River Lodge, Md.

These luxurious yurt rentals come complete with radiant floor heating, oversized shower, fully plumbed bathroom and king bed. Located near Frostburg, Md., double occupancy rates start at \$225 per night.

10. Killington Resort, Vt.

If you enjoy a good meal after a full day on the slopes, consider the Ledgewood Yurt at one of Vermont's most popular ski resorts. Enjoy a snowcat-drawn sleigh ride to a comfortable heated yurt, where you'll feast on a five-course meal. Prices start at \$59 per night. □