

Out of Bounds

SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

hammocks

It's often difficult to determine who deserves credit for the world's most earth-shattering discoveries, so the question of who deserves credit for arguably the greatest innovation in leisuredom — the hammock — is shrouded in mystery.

Scholars of ancient Greece will tell you a Socratic disciple named Alcibiades invented it. Others would argue the Mayans invented the hammock in the 11th century.

We mere mortals can't answer the question of who's responsible, but we can undoubtedly still benefit from the ingenuity displayed by *someone*, be that person Greek, Mayan or Martian. As the dog days of summer grind on us, the necessity for outdoor rest grows greater, and a hammock remains the best way to wile away an afternoon.

Purists — a polite name for the stodgy — will tell you a hammock must be made of cotton, set between two large trees at a distance of 15 feet and placed at a height of four feet to be truly enjoyed. While there is nothing misguided nor technically wrong with such an assertions, most normal folks don't have two big trees that are the perfect distance apart.

Furthermore, to limit a hammock to one location potentially has harmful effects — namely lack of shade during certain parts of the day, splotches of bird droppings and an obscuring of blue sky.



THE HAMMOCK IS THE GREATEST INNOVATION IN THE HISTORY OF LEISUREDOM

BY MARK LUCE

I say this as a reformed hammock purist. For my 30th birthday, I bought myself a hammock stand, and the difference is amazing. Now I can haul my hammock to various locations in the yard, adjusting on the fly to weather conditions, sunlight and my purpose for relaxation — be it reading, napping, listening to a ball game or imbibing in an early evening libation.

A decent cotton hammock and stand will run about \$150 with the higher end costing around \$250 to \$300. But there are some amenities that you simply can't do without, such as a set of wheels (around \$16) that connect to one end of the stand that makes moving it easier, a plush pillow and an outdoor table to place

your drink, book, cigar or snack. As in all things, proper preparation will ensure you don't have to make an extra trip to the house.

And, of course, there are some hammock no-nos. Cordless or cellular phones and pagers are particularly discouraged, since there is no need for interruption during your leisure time.

Likewise, one should bring the hammock inside and disassemble the stand in winter (unless you live in Southern climes) to prevent wear, tear and rust.

In my never-ending quest for the perfection of the good life, the simple act of lying in a hammock — with the seduction of the shade and the perpetual invitation to nap — ranks as the most versatile and enjoyable of leisure activities known to humans.

Its ancestry is intriguing, but ultimately, it's not as important as lying back, sipping on a gimlet and doing absolutely nothing.

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