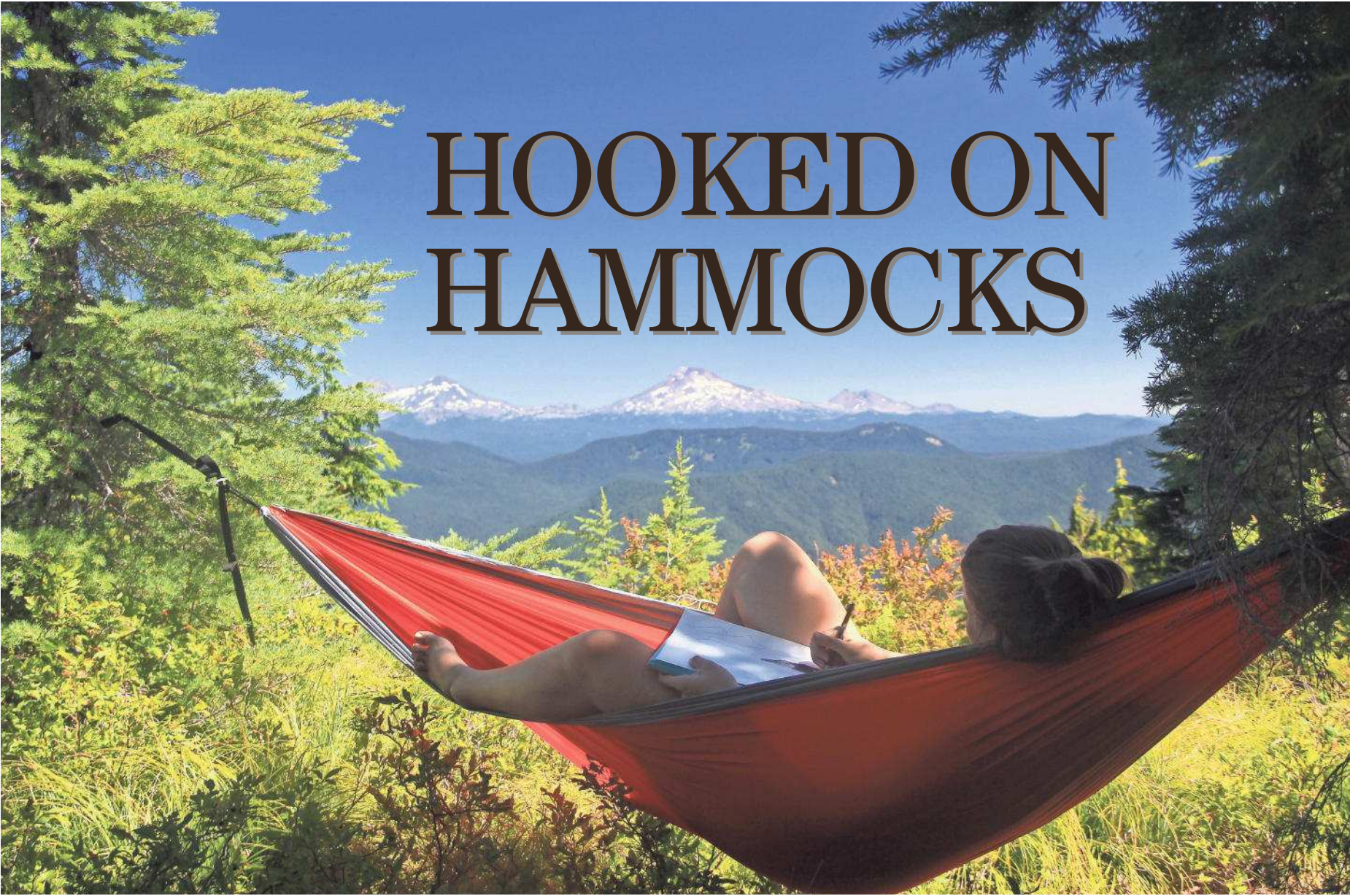


# Life *in the* Valley

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## HOOKED ON HAMMOCKS



PHOTOS BY ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Hammocks make a great way to relax with a mountain view, in this case the Three Sisters.

## Hanging beds popular among hikers, campers and hunters

ZACH URNESS  
STATESMAN JOURNAL

A few weeks ago, I was packing for a week-long camping trip with my family.

We had the tent, sleeping bags and a cooler ready to roll. The propane stove and matches were stowed in the trunk, along with air mattresses, flashlights and sunscreen.

But as we pulled from the driveway and began driving east, I realized that we had forgotten something that's become as essential to camping as mosquito repellent.

Hammocks, or, more specifically, the newly designed styles of hammock offered by brands such as Eagles Nest Outfitters and Therm-a-Rest, have sparked a revolution in the way people relax between the trees.

The new styles of hammock have made it so easy to get airborne — as long as there are trees — that this old idea is gaining purchase with a new generation of outdoor explorers.

The appeal of the hammocks is they turn good situations — like an afternoon hike — into a great situation.

After hiking 4 miles to a mountain lake, you can spread your hammock and read a book (or take a nap). They can become a slice of tranquility at a crowded music festival. And, of course, you can use them in backyards large or small.

Some even forgo a tent while backpacking, in favor of these under-the-stars nylon or polyester beds.

"I don't think it will ever replace camping with a tent," said Kelly Bauer, who works at Salem Summit Company. "But they make enough extras now, like mosquito nets, tarps and under-quilts

### Hammocks and the outdoors

**What:** New style of hammocks that you can bring hiking, backpacking or even hunting

**Cost:** ENO's single hammock costs \$59.95 while a double goes for \$69.95; **Therm-A-Rest** is \$69.95 for a single while a double goes for \$79.95; **straps** are \$20 to \$30

**Where:** Salem Summit Company and REI or online

for warmth, that if you really want to, you can convert to just hammock camping."

Two of the most popular brands include Eagles Nest Outfitters and Therm-A-Rest.

ENO uses a nylon, parachute-style material that's a bit lighter and a bit cheaper, said Conor Foley, who also works at Salem Summit Company. A single hammock costs \$59.95 while a double goes for \$69.95. The straps — what you use to attach to a tree — goes for \$20 to \$30.

Therm-A-Rest uses a nylon material that's a bit softer and a bit more expensive, at \$69.95 for a single and \$79.95 for a double.

The only difference between a single and double is the amount of material. People who sleep in the hammocks typically put their sleeping pad and bag into the hammock, creating a sort of nest.

"I'd recommend a single if you're just using it in the backyard and a double if you want to fit more than one person or sleep in it," Foley said.

Bauer said the popularity of hammocks have skyrocketed in recent years. While it began as a fun niche



Double hammocks have enough material to hold two people within the same hammock.



Hammocks make a great way to have a place to relax while visiting a lake.

used primarily by millennials, the affordable price, light weight and comfort has expanded their appeal to every demographic.

"It's popular with just about everybody at this point, even groups I might not have expected," she said. "It has really caught on with hunters, for example, and now they make hammocks with camouflage colors."

The trick to the hammocks — or at least what makes them so much better than older models — are the straps and weight. The hammock and straps break down into small and light bags easy to toss into your backpack. The straps are easy to wrap around trees and have multiple points to attach your hammock. The multiple attachment points mean it's far easier to adjust the tension of the hammock without unraveling the entire setup.

If your butt is hitting the ground, in other words, you can unclip the hammock and move it up the strap for a tighter fit.

"The hammocks we had growing up, you kind of had to retie them three or four times," Foley said. "These are just super easy to adjust."

There are plenty of extras you can add to a hammock setup. Mosquito nets, overhead tarps, "drip strips" — that stop rain from entering the hammock — can all be bought separately. You can include battery powered lights, as well, along with a brace to stop a sleeping pad from sliding around.

Hammocks, for many, have become an essential way to experience the outdoors.

That includes me.

My experience trying to backpack and sleep in the hammock was so-so — it was hard to get used to. But I do use hammocks on all camping trips and many day hikes. It's a piece of equipment worth turning the car around for.

Zach Urness, who borrowed a hammock from Salem Summit Company but did not receive any free gear or extra money for writing this story, has been an outdoors writer, photographer and videographer in Oregon for eight years. He is the author of the book "Hiking Southern Oregon" and can be reached at [zurness@StatesmanJournal.com](mailto:zurness@StatesmanJournal.com) or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Zach Urness or @ZachsORoutdoors on Twitter.