

Ever since I was very little, the rope hammock was a big part of summer. My dad used to string rope hammocks up on the porch whenever there was a party. In general, my family disapproved of luxury and lassitude. They thought that just because it was the summer didn't mean that we shouldn't get things done. Porch swings and things like that were generally left for special occasions. When we relaxed as a family, however, we did it right. We let everything hang loose, sinking into deep, blissful ease. The rope hammock was my favorite way to do this.

Back then, there was only one kind of rope hammock available. It was plain, unadorned, and well made. There was only one place you could buy a rope hammock - the hardware store. That is why I was surprised when I went shopping for hammocks the other day. There are literally dozens of different kinds nowadays. There are toy hammocks, deluxe models made for several people, and all kinds of different variations of hanging chairs and swings. The days when there was one simple, obvious choice you made are over, but having the luxury of choosing is nice.

I was impressed with the modern designs. Back in the day, our rope hammock was made out of standard, industrial strength rope. It was solid and well built, but it was not that comfortable. Today's rope hammocks, by contrast, are really quite a luxury. Not all of them are actually made out of rope. Some of them are made out of soft webbing, while other ones could barely be considered hammocks at all except for their shape. The days of the knots rubbing into your back are over. Now all you have to do is lie back and enjoy the summer day passing you by as you rock gently in the breeze.

One of the coolest innovations I have seen is the camping hammock. Camping hammocks are basically super heavy-duty versions of the traditional rope hammock. Instead of being made out of rope alone, they have a sort of combination tent and sleeping bag that hangs above ground. This insulates you from the cold ground, while also allowing you to avoid resting on a hard, barren surface. It feels really nice to sleep in one of these things, and in many ways it is a more efficient way of camping than bringing a whole tent with you.