



Bats and Bones

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Frannie and Larry Shoemaker are retirees who enjoy weekend camping with their friends in state parks in this new cozy mystery series. They anticipate the usual hiking, campfires, good food, and interesting side trips among the bluffs of beautiful Bat Cave State Park for the long Fourth of July weekend—until a dead body turns up.

Confined in the campground and surrounded by strangers, Frannie is drawn into the investigation. Frannie's persistence and curiosity helps authorities sort through the possible suspects and motives, but almost ends her new sleuth career—and her life—for good.

As a bonus, each chapter ends with a camping tip or recipe—some useful, some not so much.

Bats and Bones Details

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Author : Karen Musser Nortman

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From Reader Review Bats and Bones for online ebook

Marj says

This is the first book by K.M. Nortman that I read. It is the first of the Frannie Shoemaker Campground Mysteries series. It takes place at a fictional Iowa State Park.

Frannie Shoemaker and her husband, Larry, like to go camping. This particular 4th of July weekend they visit a local State Campground and are joined by Larry's sister and brother-in-law, Jane Ann and Mickey, and family friends, Donna and Rob, all of whom have RVs.

While going for a morning hike, the group discover the body of one of the campground hosts. She's been murdered, and her body left in a cave. There are several suspects, as the victim had been particularly hard to get along with in the days leading up to her death.

I enjoyed this cozy mystery quite a bit. The main characters, Frannie and Larry, are retired, and have been married for many years. The interaction between the two of them, and between them and the other campers, seems very believable. I will be reading additional books in the series.

Linda Marie Marsh says

What do you get when you mix one campground, two murders, a small group of recent retirees and one really good writer?? You get the novel BATS AND BONES!

First of all i enjoyed this book even more than normal because the main characters were over 50. But contrary to young folks belief they were feisty, active,funny and fun...hardly ready for a 'home'.

Other reviewers give the story synopsis so i won't be repetitive...suffice it say that this was not a fluff type book, nor was it War and Peace. It's just what you need to take your mind off your day to day worries and take you on a weekend escape.

C. says

Kept my interest from beginning to end

I found Bats and Bones (The Frannie Shoemaker Campground Mysteries) to be a very interesting read.Well written with great character and story development.I have never been camping,but I thought the camping tips at the end of each chapter were interesting and valuable to those who are campers.I thought the mystery was very interesting and plausible.

I read the Kindle version and have no formatting complaints.

Highly recommended for cozy mystery lovers.

Caitlin Copp says

Franny and Larry Shoemaker are spending the Fourth of July weekend camping with some friends. They expect this weekend will go like any other- some hiking, reading, relaxing and lots of eating. What they don't expect is to find the dead body of the campground host in a bat cave. I like that Franny has a way of investigating without being particularly obnoxious and nosy. She manages to work with the police as well as the park rangers to find the killer but not without a couple close calls of her own.

Evgeny says

Frannie and Larry Shoemaker are retired couple who went camping with their friends and relatives. They hoped for a long quiet weekend, but found themselves right in the middle of a murder investigation (they stumbled upon a dead body on a hiking trail), bad weather and other unpleasant things instead. Frannie found some clues to the crime by accident, so she happened to be one of the characters who finally were able to unravel the mystery.

Considering the price for this book on Amazon (it was practically free) this book worth much more. I really like the banter between Larry and his brother-in-law Mickey. The mystery was interesting and the plot intriguing enough. It was the author's first book and as such it has some weaknesses which can be easily overlooked if you consider the book's strengths.

The final rating is 3.5 stars rounded up for the solid first effort.

Donna says

Frannie and Larry Shoemaker are a couple of retirees that enjoy RV camping with other retiree friends. Normally their camping is quiet and peaceful until some new campers come to the state park they are camping at. First they parked their RV in the wrong place which causes them to have a run in with the camp hostess. Then Frannie and her crew take a walk and find a body. Everything seems to go down hill from there. Fortunately Larry is a retired cop so he was able to keep the area clean until the local police got there. Due to the murder the park is closed and no one can leave which makes everyone nervous that there may be a murderer among them. This is a great mystery with lots of angles and suspects. I enjoyed it enough that I would read the next one in the series.

Moondance says

A large new motorhome pulled forward into a campsite.

The first book in the Frannie Shoemaker series starts with newbie RV campers parking in the wrong direction. And so begins a spiral of things that can go wrong. The main characters of the series are Frannie and her husband Larry, Larry's sister, Jane Ann and her husband, Mickey and family friends, Donna and Rob. The couples travel to state parks in their RVs to camp.

The setting is a state park in Iowa with lots of caves and good hiking trails. Frannie stumbles across a body

on the first day of hiking. Larry, a retired cop, assists with crowd control while the young ranger contacts the local authorities. The campground is closed until a resolution is reached in the murder.

I enjoyed the story and the characters. The camping tips were timely and would be very useful if I ever decided to camp again. (Not going to happen!) There was a good amount of suspense and multiple suspects. The last few chapters were written so that you felt you were involved with Frannie.

I will be looking for the next books in the series. An enjoyable read.

Lisa says

A retired couple and their friends' Fourth of July camping plans take a surprising turn when they find a dead body on a hike. Cabin fever and suspicion grow as the camping grounds are put on lock-down. Frannie, her husband, and her friends find themselves more involved than they'd like to be. What did I think of this story? Camping? Hate it! Hiking? Hate it! Outdoors? Hate it! A hot Fourth of July spent largely outdoors with little air conditioning and public facilities? Ew, gross - hate it! Surprisingly, though, I really liked this book! I found the main characters to be likable and not too stupid - even the slightly annoying one. And, I always enjoy it when characters show personal growth. There was only one part I didn't understand about a particular someone being permitted to leave the campgrounds once his son arrived. I even liked the camping tips at the end of each chapter. Who knows? I may shock the world someday and take up Rv'ing. Throughout this book, I kept picturing my friend Teresa and her husband in the roles of the protagonist and her husband (despite the former couples' younger ages) because I know how much they like outdoorsy activities such as this. I look forward to reading more in this series. If GoodReads were a half-star rating system, I'd give this one 4.5 stars. It seemed a teeny bit on the long side. However, the last half of the story flew by!

Rebecca McNutt says

Who knew a book about a retired couple going camping could be so entertaining? I usually don't like cozy mysteries, but *Bats and Bones* was alright.

Allison says

Loved it! Makes me want to buy a camper/RV. I love camping anyway and the descriptions of the food, the fires, the hiking...sigh...I just wanna go, lol. There was a good mystery in this as well and I would definitely read more in the series. The characters and their interactions with each other remind me of the relationships my husband and I have with another couple of friends.

Sabine says

It was actually a 3.5 star rating.

It was definitely a good mystery and I loved the outdoor and camping theme a lot ... but the writing was somewhat unpersonal and I couldn't feel with the characters. Most of the time I felt like reading a report.

Still, it wasn't a bad book and I will keep on reading this series.

Suzanne says

I enjoyed this book. I can't say why exactly but for some reason while reading I felt like I was totally relaxed and having fun. Which is why the 4 star rating.

The story is about 2 couples, a brother and his wife, Larry and Frannie, and his sister and her husband, Jane Ann and Mickey who are all retired and like to go camping together on the week-ends. Another couple overhears Rob and Donna asks to come along. While the ladies don't care for Donna what can they say. After setting up, the campground host Mauve who has had problems with some of the park guests is found murdered on a morning walk and so the story begins.

The characters are well written and even though it is your basic story the little twist at the end was a good change of pace. This is a series I would recommend and I will continue to read as long as I can do it from the comfort of my home and no longer have to battle the joys of camping.

Betty says

Frannie Shoemaker and friends were terrified as thunder booms and wind moved the shower building that shelter them from the storm. Morning came and the tornado had missed them. Frannie was remembering back to the day they arrived for nice visit to Iowa State Park. So much had happened it was hard to access it. The body they had found near the caves and being confined to the park. Now one of the campers is missing and searched for him has been set up. Frannie wonder how,would end.

Disclosure: I was provide with a free copy for an honest review

Angie says

Full disclosure alert: I am proud to say that the author was my teacher in high school so I may be a bit biased.

I very much appreciate the lack of spelling, grammatical & editing errors that seem to be more frequent in books these days; especially in Kindle books.

I really enjoyed this fun mystery; particularly because I am from Iowa and my family loves to camp so the local references were neat. I am a geocacher, which is still somewhat unique so the geocaching bits were exciting to read about. I think the "Happy Camper Tips" are a fantastic addition; I can't wait to try the recipe for smashed potatoes & gravy - YUM! I also have seen the awesome over the fire grill mentioned in the book - my parents have one & I really covet it!

The mystery kept me guessing, there were lots of interesting twists & turns. The characters were developed well and I could picture everyone in my mind (although I couldn't help trying to guess who, in real life, each character represented). I could also picture the campground and trails despite the fact that I have never been to the park that inspired the fictional park in the book. After reading this, I think we'll have to work a trip to

Maquoketa into our summer camping plans...I sure hope no one ends up murdered in a cave!

Brenda says

Retired couple Frannie and Larry Shoemaker, along with Larry's sister Jane Ann and husband Mickey, and friends Donna and Rob arrived at the Bat Cave State Park camping ground for the July 4th long weekend, each in their own camper. They loved camping, relaxing and enjoying their surroundings, and made sure they got together quite often. They had no idea this weekend was going to be very different to their previous trips away!

The heat was intense; when they had unpacked they relaxed in their chairs and watched the camp come to life. They were amused by the big camper, loaded with half a dozen guys trying to get set up, and when camp supervisor Maeve Schlumm came stomping up to inform them they were in the wrong spot, tempers flared.

The following morning the six of them decided to go for a walk, early, before the heat got intense, through the forest towards the caves in the area. They were currently closed, but the friends could enjoy the walk anyway. When they discovered a body in the mouth of one of the caves, their weekend began to go very wrong. Everyone in the camping ground were confined to the site while the sheriff and his deputy tried to put the very sparse clues together, also to make sure a possible killer didn't get away.

With Frannie innocently questioning events, she and her friends were drawn into the investigation. Suddenly Mother Nature, a killer, stressed strangers and another body all combined to make it very dangerous for Frannie and her friends. Would the killer be caught before anything else happened? Would the state park reveal any secrets?

This was a great book! I thoroughly enjoyed the three couples and their interactions with each other, and other campers. The descriptions of the areas in the state park, the enjoyment of sitting around the camp, relaxing, playing cards or reading, befriending young five year old River and his mother Stephanie; I could see everything the author was describing which made me feel I was there at times.

An enjoyable cosy mystery I have no hesitation in recommending.
