



RV 101®

Volume 6
Issue 12

AT THE CAMPGROUND

Campground tips for newbies and experienced RVers



and much
more

Types of Campgrounds
public & private campgrounds

RV Pre-Trip Checklist
what to do before you go

Campground Set-Up Checklist
what to do when you get there



Campground Concerns



There is talk in the RV industry about where RV owners are going

to camp if the industry builds, ships and sells between 400,000 & 500,000 units every year, while the number of campgrounds, RV parks, RV resorts and public campsites stays about the same. Several years ago when I was researching and writing my RV Campground Basics e-book the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) stated there are approximately 8,500 RV parks and campgrounds located near national parks and forests, popular tourist attractions, along interstates and in cities and small towns. And at the nation's 390 National Parks there are over 440 campgrounds offering 29,000 campsites.

I have witnessed more campgrounds operating at full capacity during our travels, especially during the peak travel season. A need does exist for more campground options, but I have always said if you plan your trips and make campground reservations in advance you will almost always have a place to stay.

I can't magically make more campgrounds appear, but in this RV101® campground issue I want to discuss some of the camping options we do have, and provide you with information to help make all your camping experiences more enjoyable. **Mark**



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- Devin T., Georgia



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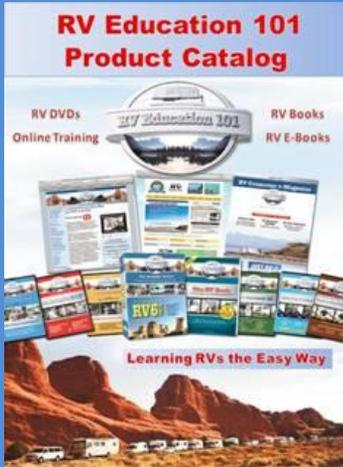
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Our digital RV Product Catalog puts all of our RV training products in one place, and we separate what products apply to what type of RV. For example if you own a travel trailer you can browse through the single DVD titles or go directly to the DVD value sets that apply specifically to travel trailers.

This helps accomplish two things; it eliminates the guess work as to which DVD titles go together, and it saves the RV consumer a significant amount of money with our DVD box set discounts. Our goal at RV Education 101 is simple, to help RV owners until they are comfortable operating and using their RV, and to make their entire RV experience safe, fun and stress free. [Browse the product catalog now](#)

Enjoy the RV Journey



Wherever it takes you

Types of Campgrounds

Public campgrounds are campgrounds found in our national parks and national forests, state parks and state forests, army corps of engineer projects and bureau of land management areas.

These campgrounds are run by a government agency and are quite affordable. Public camping is more of what I consider back to nature type camping, whereas most private campgrounds offer more amenities like a camp store, recreation centers, laundry rooms, playgrounds, swimming pools, full hook-ups and more.

Public campgrounds usually offer restrooms; a picnic table, a fire pit and some will have shower facilities. There are typically more tent campers at public campgrounds than at private parks, and hook-ups like water and electricity may or may not be available for RVs. Many of these public campgrounds have size restrictions for RVs too. Check out any restrictions that may apply before attempting to stay at a public campground.

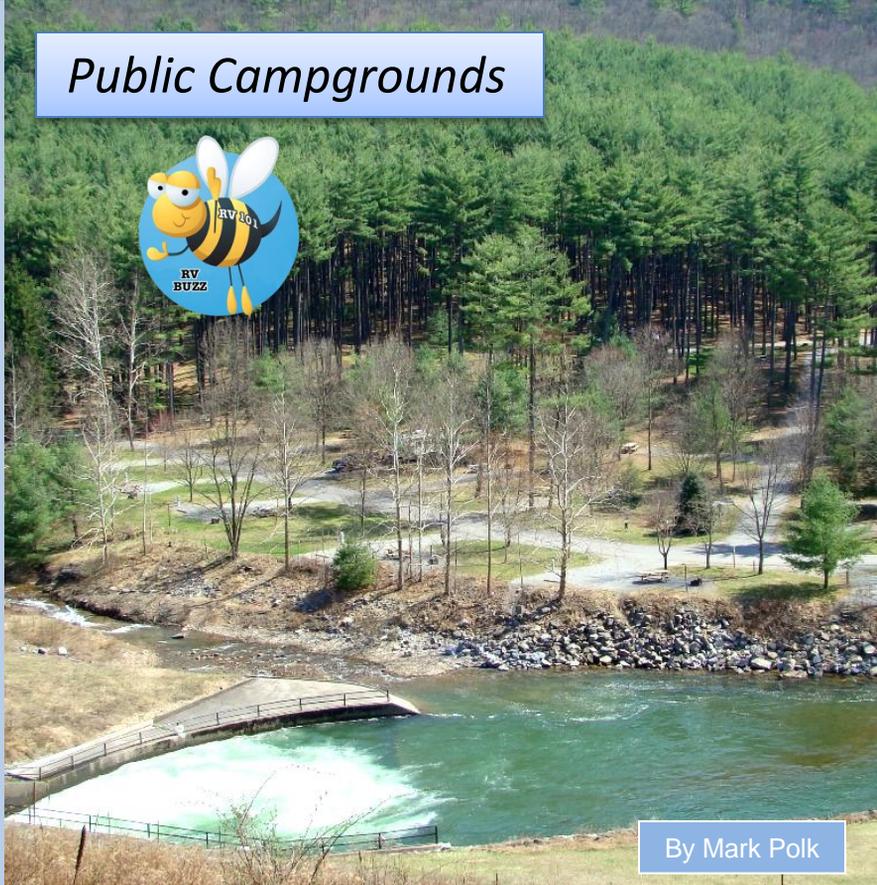
Campground Terminology: (Boondocking) Remote type of camping without any utility hook-ups like water, electric, and sewer. Fees may or may not apply.

If you enjoy getting back to nature and more primitive type camping there are many beautiful public campgrounds waiting for you to visit. Let's take a closer look at some of the public campgrounds available to us.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service

The Forest Service was established in 1905 and is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The USDA Forest Service manages our public lands in

Public Campgrounds



By Mark Polk

national forests and grasslands. The USDA Forest Service offers more than 4,000 campgrounds in its 156 forests, which covers more than 193 million acres of land. The Forest Service stated there are more than 200,000 miles of forest roads currently open to off-highway vehicle (OHV) use as well as more than 36,000 miles of trails. And there are 128,000 miles of streams and rivers, 16,500 miles of coasts and shorelines and 2.2 million acres of lakes.

National Park Service (NPS)

Our national parks are large natural areas that have a wide variety of attributes, and at times include significant historic assets. Nearly 60% of the 390 park areas administered by the NPS have been set aside as symbols of our history.

Our national parks offer us a wide variety of camping and recreational opportunities. There are primitive type campsites for tent campers and back packers and there are developed campsites for RVs. Of the nearly 400 parks there are over 100 campgrounds open to the public.

Many national park campsites are first come first served, and some can be reserved. [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov) is a great site to get more information, or to make campground reservations.

State Parks & State Forests

Like our national parks and forests, our state parks and state forests offer wonderful facilities and services for family camping.

State parks offer amenities like clean restrooms and showers, hiking trails, boat launches, picnic areas, swimming areas and playgrounds. State park campgrounds usually have RV sites with electric and water hook-ups. Some have an RV dump station close by. Campsites normally include picnic tables, fire rings, and a well maintained area for a tent or RV. There might be size limits for RVs so check before planning a trip.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The USACE provides numerous recreational opportunities. It is the leading provider of outdoor recreation on all federally managed public lands in the United States. The USACE manages over 450 lakes, with more than 4,300 recreation areas, offering more than 53,000 campsites located near our oceans, rivers and lakes. Like all of the other public campgrounds amenities are limited; restrooms, showers, picnic tables and fire rings are typical. [Reserve America](https://www.reserveamerica.com) is another good site for information and for making reservations.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The BLM is an agency in the Department of Interior, in the US government. The BLM manages nearly 270 million acres of public lands with scenic recreation sites, located mostly in 12 Western States, including Alaska. There are over 400 campgrounds on these public lands with more than 17,000 campsites.

Private Campgrounds



Now that we discussed public campgrounds let's take a look at private campgrounds. A good example of a private campground network is Kampgrounds of America (KOA). We enjoy staying at [KOA campgrounds](#) because we know what we can expect upon arrival and throughout our stay.

Private Campgrounds, RV parks and RV resorts are owned by individuals or businesses. These campgrounds cater more to the needs of RVers. You will find these campgrounds conveniently located close to interstates, popular tourist attractions, small towns, large cities and everywhere in between.

Most private campgrounds offer water, electric, and sewer hook-ups and a variety of other amenities. It's not uncommon for a modern campground to have a camp store, game room, laundry room, restrooms, showers,

swimming pool, playground, cable TV and wireless Internet access.

RV resorts have even more to offer if that's what you are looking for; amenities like tennis courts, golf courses, fitness centers, spas and more.

Campground Terminology: (Full Hook-Up or Full Service)

A full hook-up means you connect the RV to the campgrounds electric, water and sewer. In addition to these utilities it might also include cable TV and free internet access.

Regardless of the type of camping you enjoy there are plentiful places to do it. With all of these places to go camping in your RV finding one shouldn't be that difficult, but remember what I said earlier about planning your RV trips and making reservations in advance. ~RV101



RV Pre-Trip Checklist

The last thing you want, after waiting for your planned RV vacation to get here, is to breakdown before getting to your destination. The best way to prevent this from happening is to make some pre-trip checks prior to leaving on your trip. And to make sure you don't forget to check something it's best to use a checklist.

This checklist is an excerpt from our best-selling e-book titled [Checklists for RVers](#)

Pre-Trip Checks Outside the RV

- Top off fuel and propane tanks.
- Check the air pressure in all tires. Check tires when cold before traveling.
- Check lug nuts on wheels. Discoloration and stains around lug nuts indicate they might be loose.
- Make sure all items in storage compartments are secure. Lock all outside compartments.
- Check the bike rack and bikes for secure mounting if applicable.
- Make sure the power cord, water hose and sewer hose are disconnected and stored.
- Make sure all slide-outs are in and slide-out travel locks are securely in place.
- Make sure the TV antenna and/or satellite are stowed in the proper position for traveling.
- Check the awning. Make sure it is securely stored and all travel locks and knobs are tight and locked.

Pre-Trip Checks Outside the RV Continued

- Raise and/or remove all stabilizer jacks or hydraulic leveling jacks.
- Look under the RV for any indications of leaks (motorized or tow vehicle) and for anything out of the ordinary.
- Stow or retract the step.
- Fill the fresh water holding tank with enough potable water to get to your destination. Remember, water adds weight to the RV.
- Check and secure the cap on the sewer outlet.
- There is controversy over traveling with the LP gas turned on. For safety purposes I recommend turning off all LP gas appliances and turning the gas supply off at the tank or cylinders when traveling.
- Hitch up towables & inspect all hitch components prior to leaving.
- Check all fluid levels (motorized) and tow vehicles.
- Remove and store wheel chocks.
- Check all running lights, turn signals, brake lights and headlights on the RV and/or tow vehicle.
- Check for up to date inspection/emissions and license plates.
- Check trailer brakes for proper operation.
- Make one final walk-around and check for anything you may have overlooked.

Pre-Trip Checks Inside the RV

- Walk through the RV and secure all loose items that could move, fall or get damaged while traveling.
- Turn off all appliances, gas & electric.
- Close all roof vents unless you have vent covers.
- Close all doors, drawers and cabinets.
- Check for anything in the refrigerator that could spill. Lock the refrigerator and freezer doors.
- Turn off the 12-volt water pump.
- Close the range top cover.
- Turn off all lights, stereos, and other 12-volt devices that could drain the auxiliary battery.
- Close windows and secure blinds.
- Secure any large items like TVs and computers that might move or fall.
- All weight in the RV should be distributed evenly. It is a good idea to have the RV weighed when it is fully loaded to make sure you are not exceeding any weight ratings.
- Adjust your mirrors and seat, use your seat belts and have a safe journey.

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Don't forget to check out [Mark's new Blog](#), and our [new RV101 YouTube Channel](#)

Types of RV Sites

When we talk about RV sites it boils down to where you will be parking and setting your RV up at the campground. The site is usually determined by the size of your RV and tow vehicle, and the type of utility connections you prefer.

When you get a site at a campground there should be sufficient room to set the RV up and enough room to park the tow vehicle. Some campgrounds that were designed and constructed many years ago cannot accommodate the length of some of today's RVs and/or RVs with multiple slide-outs. You should check with the campground prior to making plans to stay there.

Camping Tip: Some state and federal parks have size restrictions on RVs. If you enjoy camping at these types of locations read up on any and all restrictions prior to purchasing your RV.

We already touched on some of the different types of campsites you might run across at public and private campgrounds, but I think the topic deserves more discussion.

Understanding some of your options as it pertains to campsites can make your stay at the campground more enjoyable.

You can go from one extreme to the other when it comes to campsite connections and amenities. You might be dry-camping (no hook-ups) in a national forest campsite, or you might be staying at an expensive private gated RV resort with 100-foot concrete pull-through sites with water, electric, sewer, cable TV, and wireless internet service.

There are lots of choices available and it's up to you to decide what type of camping you enjoy. This section is designed to help explain some of the choices you have when it comes to selecting a campsite.



Dry-Camping & Boondocking

I mentioned earlier the most basic type of campsite there is, dry-camping, where there are no campground utilities to connect to. This type of camping is popular with tent campers and RV enthusiasts who like to get back to the basics, but still have the amenities an RV has to offer.

The type of RV you have and how it is equipped will determine how comfortable you will be when you go dry-camping. What I mean is how large the holding tanks are, what type of battery bank you have on the RV, do you have a generator, how much fresh water can you store, and do you have an inverter and solar panels? Basically, it amounts to how many days you can go dry-camping before you deplete one or more of your RVs self contained resources.



Partial Hook-Ups

The next type of campsite would be with partial hook-ups. These sites are commonly found in public campgrounds like state parks. Typically you will have water and electric hook-ups, but no sewer. With an RV you will need to exercise caution with electric connections at some of these campgrounds. It's quite possible it will be a 15 or 20 amp service rather than a 30 or 50 amp service. You will need to monitor the amount of electricity you are using at any given time. [Watch Living on 30 Amps video](#)

Lots of public campgrounds have restrooms and some have shower facilities too. Depending on how developed it is, there might be a dump station available to empty your holding tanks. Campers who frequent these campsites often purchase portable tote tanks to empty their holding tanks into and transport it to the dump station so they don't have to move the RV from the site. Partial hook-up sites are not only found in public campgrounds; there are a lot of private campgrounds that have partial hook-up sites available for tent campers and RVers who will only be staying at the campground for a short period of time and don't require a sewer hook-up.

Some campgrounds have a separate dump station in addition to individual sites with sewer hook-ups. At the dump station you pay a reasonable fee to empty your holding tanks before leaving the campground.

Camping Tip: If you are staying at the campground dump station fees are usually included in the campground fees. Outsiders stopping to empty their holding tanks at the dump station will pay a fee.



Full Hook-Ups

A full hook-up means you can connect to the campground's water, electric and sewer utilities. Full hook-ups are common at private campgrounds and at many of the more developed public campgrounds. In addition to water, electric and sewer lots of campgrounds offer cable TV and wireless Internet access too. Sometimes these additional amenities are included in the price of the campsite and other times there is an added fee for these extras.

All of [our RV walkthrough DVDs and instant download videos](#) cover campground set-up, electric, water, LP gas and waste-water systems and RV safety features.





Pull-Through Sites

A pull-through site is a site where you can drive in one end and drive out the other end without any backing required. These sites are nice for large RVs and tow vehicles, and they are convenient when you are only stopping for the night and don't want to unhook the tow vehicle from the RV. Pull-through sites are also nice for RV owners who have trouble backing the RV into a site. [Watch Trailer Backing Video](#)

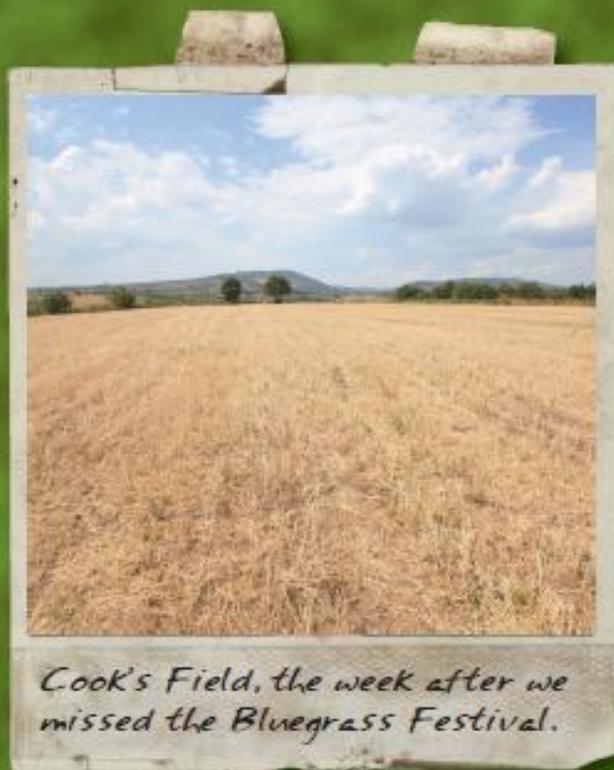
Camping Tip: If you would like to learn more about towing and backing a trailer check out our [Trailer Towing Basics](#) download or [Tow your 5th Wheel Like a Pro](#)

Some campgrounds don't have any pull-through sites and other campgrounds have a limited number of pull-through sites available. In the latter case, the campground determines who gets these sites. If a pull-through site is important to you call the campground in advance to reserve one.

Campground Fees

Campground fees are based on various factors; where the campground is located, what time of year it is, the size and type of site you get and the campground utilities and amenities offered. An RV site at a public campground with water and electricity might be \$20 per night, where a private campground near a popular tourist attraction on the fourth of July might be \$80 or more per night. On average you can expect to spend anywhere from \$40 to \$50 per night for a full hook-up RV site at a typical private campground. There are additional fees based on the number of people with you and in some cases for extra services like wireless Internet access.

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Campground Set-Up Checklist

When you arrive at the campground there are usually parking lanes where you can park the RV and go inside the campground office to register.



If you arrive after hours there is typically a late arrival registration area close to the campground office. Follow the instructions and then stop by the office the next day.

Setting the RV and campsite up will get easier with experience. As a matter of fact before long you will be an expert at setting things up exactly how you like it. Until then here is a checklist from our [Checklist for RVers e-book](#) to help get you started. It would be impossible to cover everything involved with this checklist because of the vast differences between RVs. However most RVs do have many things in common and that is what we will concentrate on. The purpose of this checklist is to provide a basic list of what to do when you arrive at your campsite. Only use the items that apply to your RV and feel free to tailor the list to your specific needs.

Travel Trailer & Motorhome Set-Up

- If you are in a motorhome and are towing a vehicle you might want to disconnect the tow vehicle in the campground registration parking area. The campground usually provides an escort to assist in locating your site.
- Conduct a site survey. Identify where all campground connections are and where you want the RV located to access all utility connections. Take into consideration where slide-outs will be and if there is room to put the awning out. Make sure there are no low hanging branches or other obstacles that will interfere with the RV.
- Determine if you need to back in or if it is a pull-through site. Position the RV on the site and double-check all clearances and access to hook-ups.
- If you have a motor home set the parking brake.
- Level the RV as required. [Watch Video for leveling a trailer](#)
- Chock the wheels.
- Disconnect from the tow vehicle if applicable.
- Put stabilizer jacks down if applicable.
- If you have a motorhome and there is a battery disconnect switch for the chassis battery turn it off to prevent any drain on the starting battery.
- If you have an auxiliary battery disconnect switch for the coach battery(s) it should be turned on.
- Put the entry steps out. If you have a switch for the steps turn it on so the steps stay out when the entry door is opened or closed.
- Remove any slide-out travel locks and extend the slide-out(s) if they won't interfere with making basic campground connections. Have someone watch for clearance and obstacles in the slide-out path. Make sure the driver's seat is not in the way of the slide-out if it is a motorhome.
- Test the campground voltage and polarity using a voltmeter or digital line monitor.

Travel Trailer & Motorhome Set-Up Continued

- Pull enough power cord from the compartment to reach the campground electrical connection. Turn the circuit breaker off at the power pedestal and plug into the receptacle that matches the amperage requirements of your RV. Use electrical adapters as required. If at all possible try to avoid using an extension cord. Turn the breaker on.
- I recommend using a quality surge protector to protect the RV's electrical system. [Watch Video](#)
- Check the RV to make sure electricity is working. If you have a plug in digital line monitor plug it into a wall outlet so you can monitor campground voltage during your stay. Any readings below 105 volts or above 130 volts can be dangerous to your appliances and electronic equipment.
- Turn the refrigerator on in the auto or electric mode.
- If you have an exterior water filter hook it up to the city water supply at the campground.
- If you don't use a water filter connect a water pressure regulator to the campground water supply. [Watch the Water Regulator Video](#)
- Attach one end of your potable RV drinking hose (white or blue hose) to the regulator or water filter at the campground water supply and the other end to the city water inlet on the RV.
- Turn the water on and check for any leaks at the connections. Make sure you have water coming into the RV.
- When you are connected to a city water supply do not use the 12-volt water pump. Only use the water pump when you don't have an external water supply and need to draw water from the fresh water holding tank.
- Wearing gloves remove the cap from the sewer drain outlet and attach the sewer hose to the bayonet fittings at the outlet. Be sure to turn the hose connector clockwise so the locking tabs securely lock in place. Place the sewer hose donut or seal in the campground sewer connection. Attach the opposite end of the sewer hose in the donut. [Watch our RV Sewer Hose Tips & Tricks video](#)
- If you have a sewer hose support set it up now to allow for a slope from the RV to the sewer connection to assist in emptying the holding tanks.

For more campground information and tips watch our [RV campground Tips for better Trips video](#)



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Campground Etiquette & Rules

Just about every campground you go to will have a list of rules they request visitors to follow, just like the rules you have for your household. Another list of rules that isn't necessarily written anywhere is what is referred to as campground etiquette. These are the rules that RV owners learn over time and practice out of respect for other campers, the campground owners and the environment. When you arrive at the campground you should always observe the following campground etiquette.



Be a Good Neighbor

This is a big one and it encompasses many areas surrounding your stay at the campground. When a campground gets busy it means more people, more RVs, more children, and more pets, which usually equates to less personal space for everybody. One of the reasons we enjoy getting away in our RV is to get a little peace and quiet. Now it's understandable for children, who are excited to be camping, to make some noise but there is

a time and place for everything. Not everybody likes getting up early or staying up late, so you need to be considerate of the people around you.

Don't let your children make a lot of noise early in the morning and late at night. And it's not always children who are making all the noise. Sometimes it's the guy who for

some reason thinks he has to start his diesel every morning and let it sit and idle for no reason. Sometimes it's at a state park and the camper next to you runs the generator all hours of the night. Other times it's your loud neighbors who have campfire parties until two or three in the morning.



Quiet Hours

Campgrounds have quiet hours and you and people with you need to observe these quiet hours. During quiet hours you shouldn't hear generators running or parties next door. If you arrive at the campground early in the morning or late in the evening, try to limit the amount of noise and light used while getting parked and set up.



Police your Area

In the military, "police call" meant to go through an area and pick up any trash, and to keep your area looking clean and presentable at all times. This is a good rule for campers. Your neighbor, who sometimes is only 15 feet away, doesn't want your trash to end up in their area. Try to keep your campsite organized and keep

the trash picked up. Don't let things like paper plates and paper cups sit outside that can quickly end up next door. Trash and food left outside can also attract some unwanted guests like ants, mice, squirrels, raccoons, and even bears. Keeping your camp area clean and picked up will make this less likely to occur.



Washing Vehicles

Often times when we're at a campground I see people washing their RV and other vehicles. I too, am frustrated by all of the dead bugs on the front of our RV when we arrive at the campground, but before you drag out the bucket and hose check with the campground staff to make sure it's okay to wash vehicles. Some RV parks pay a high price for their water.

One idea is to keep some type of waterless washing product on hand in the RV so you have the ability to clean the RV even when there are water restrictions.

Fires and Fire Pits



If there is a fire restriction where you are staying never start a fire, even if there is a fire pit. Avoid putting trash in the fire pit too; if it isn't wood it shouldn't go in the fire pit. Trash in the fire pit can attract more unwanted guests. Never cut branches from a live tree, or the tree itself to use for fire wood. In many public campgrounds gathering firewood is

strictly prohibited, check the campground rules about fires and firewood. Many public and private campgrounds sell firewood for campfires. Always make sure the fire is completely out before leaving the area unattended, or retiring for the night. If you are a smoker avoid throwing cigarette butts on the ground. If conditions are right, and the cigarette butt is not completely out, it could start the entire forest on fire.



Instruct Children on Dos & Don'ts

Children just want to have fun, but it shouldn't be at the expense of other campers. Instruct your children not to run and ride bikes through somebody else's campsite, to take a shortcut to the swimming pool or the game room. You are in essence renting the space you are in and it should be just that, your space.

You should also explain to children that they need to be extremely careful when riding bikes, skateboards, scooters and running through the campground. There is constant traffic in and out of a campground, especially when it's busy and not everybody is watching for small children. This is why adults should always go the speed limit too, which is usually 5 or 10 miles per hour in the campground area.

Security



Even though the majority of campgrounds you visit are for the most part safe and secure you shouldn't let your guard down too much. Leaving valuables sitting around the campsite unattended, or leaving your door open or unlocked is asking for trouble. Not everybody is as honest as you may be. Unsecured bicycles, scooters, video games, hitch work and other valuables can be an easy target for the not so honest camper.

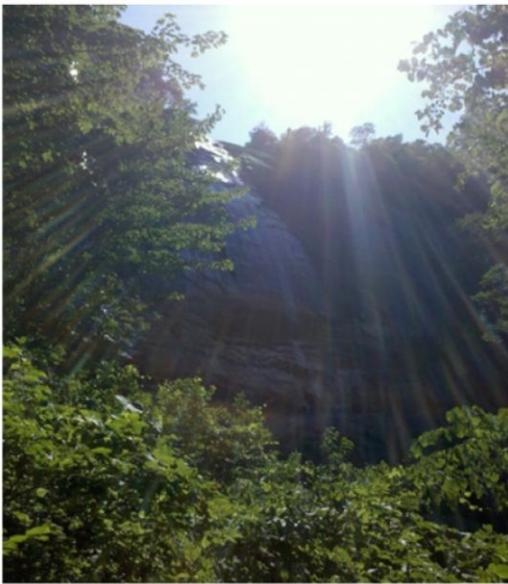
Control your Pets



Pets and RVs just seem to go together, but keep in mind not everybody is a pet lover. If you have pets at the campground it is your responsibility to control them. First make sure you understand the campgrounds rules as it pertains to pets. Your dogs should never be outside unless they are on a leash. And even when they are on a leash you need to keep them out

of other camper's campsites. Use the campgrounds designated area for pets if there is one, and always clean up behind your pets. Control your dogs barking. I have seen instances where people leave their pet at the campground while they go on a day trip and the dog barks non-stop all day. It is your responsibility to control a barking dog. Don't be surprised if you are asked to leave if your pet is out of control.

Respect the Environment



There are a lot of beautiful places for us to visit with our RVs and it is up to us to protect these areas during our stay. Don't litter or put trash into the streams, rivers and lakes. Don't start a fire if there is a fire restriction, even if there is a fire pit. Never empty your gray or black water tanks anywhere except in specified dump stations and campground sewer systems. Always leave the campsite in the condition you found it or in a better condition than you found it in.

Reporting Problems

Campgrounds have camp hosts and campground managers who are available on site. If you have a problem with another camper or a campground staff member you need to address the problem with the camp host or manager and let them resolve it. ~RV101



Something I really like about
RVing is you don't know where
your next morning cup of coffee
might be. ~ *Mark J. Polk*



Just for Fun

10 things we forget to take on Camping Trips



No matter how well we think the RV is stocked up for a trip inevitably we forget something and need to buy it at the campground store. This has happened to us more than once so I thought it would be fun to compile a list of 10 items folks forget to keep on hand in the RV for camping trips.

Let's see what made the list



1) An extra sewer hose just in case you can't reach the sewer drain outlet at the campground



2) Extra sewer hose adapters & connectors so you can connect to different types of drain outlets.



3) Some TV coax cable so you don't miss your favorite television show.



4) Some Citronella candles to help keep mosquitoes away from your outdoor camping area.



5) Laundry soap so you can do a quick load of laundry at the campground.



6) Shower shoes for the bathhouse and the swimming pool.



7) A tablecloth and some clamps to secure it to the picnic table.



8) Bug spray just in case the Citronella candles don't do the job.



9) A first aid kit in case of an accident or an emergency.



10) Aluminum foil so you can grill outside instead of cooking inside the RV.

Well there you have it, my list of the top 10 items folks forget to keep in the RV for camping trips. Don't fret if you forget to take something because campground stores have all of these items and much more. **What's on your list?**



*Happy Camping,
Mark*

**Always leave your campsite
the way you found it, or better**



*Thanks
For Coming*

- ✓ **ANTENNA DOWN**
- ✓ **STEPS UP**
- ✓ **WIFE ABOARD**

*Have a
Safe Trip*

