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# Sep 2015

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## The latest RV news

**California** hasn't been spared some of the worst fire season of the West this year — and it isn't over yet. Fire officials say they don't expect to see a peak in fire activity until the end of this month or into October.

**New York state** park officials are basking in the warmth of a summer of love — at least people who love parks. As of a few days ago, more than 562,000 overnight stays in the parks so far this year marked a nearly 10 percent increase from 2014.

The Bureau of Land Management has reopened all trails and campgrounds in the **King Range of California** that were closed due to the Horse Fire. The fire broke out six miles northeast of Shelter Cove on August 18.

Winds blasting nearly 90 miles per hour tore through **Olympic National Park in Washington** on August 29. The "historic" windstorm (labeled so because storms of this magnitude rarely come in summer) closed roads in the park and shut down Kalaloch, Ozette and Mora campgrounds. All campgrounds but Mora were reopened within three days.

Ever wished that holiday weekend would never end? Campers at **Iowa's Springbrook State Park** almost got their wish when a torrential rainstorm flooded over the only road in and out of the campground. Campers were evacuated at two in the morning Monday; they were told it might be days before they can get their rigs out of the campground.

Managers and guests of two **Phoenix, Ariz.**, RV parks looking for relief got their hopes dashed recently. Folks at the Desert Edge RV Park and the nearby Phoenix Metro RV Park say the odors emanating from a nearby recycling plant are intolerable. City officials were to vote on a matter that might bring relief, but a clerical error caused a push-off of the vote into October.

Looking to camp host in late summer and fall? A host is needed for giving visitors a steer, collecting site fees, and doing light maintenance at the Bureau of Land Management Pit River Campground near **Fall River Mills, Calif.** Hosts get a hook-up site and small stipend. Call Claude Singleton with the BLM at 530-233-4666.

Email. E-books. Now, E-parks? There's one coming to **Dorset, Vt.** State park officials are taking Emerald Lake State Park "off the grid" by installing solar panels that will kick out up to 10 megawatts of energy. A battery bank will keep the park operating when the sun is uncooperative. Installation begins next spring.

Dumb-crooks-don't-wise-up department. **Alaska** troopers checked in on three guys who failed to pay their site fees at Johnson Lake Campground. Turns out one of them was wanted on an arrest warrant for failure to comply with probation on a felony. Another was a felon — and his terms of probation prohibited him from being in the company of felons. The third was the driver — who had a revoked license. All three were arrested.

Kansas Point Campground at Lake Maloney State Recreation Area near **North Platte, Neb.**, has closed the gate temporarily to upgrade all RV electric sites. The state campground will reopen in two to three weeks.

A wet summer in **Vermont** has turned into a winner for state park officials. The Labor Day weekend had only 10 reservable campsites left uncalled for, out of 2,200 available.

The annual **Hershey RV Show**, dubbed "America's Largest RV Show," kicks off this coming Wednesday, Sept. 16 and runs through the following Sunday in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The show covers an area as large as 33 football fields. Many RV manufacturers will debut their 2016 models and other companies will unveil their new RV-related products. Learn more at **LargestRVshow.com**.

**KOA and Airstream** are running a contest titled "What's Behind The Sign?" The grand-prize winner will receive a new 2015 Airstream 16-foot Sport travel trailer along with a \$100 KOA gift card. Campers can enter the contest once a day through Oct. 31 on the KOA Facebook page or at **BehindTheSignGiveaway.com**.

A big, seemingly complacent kitty has put rangers on edge at Etherington Creek Campground southwest of **Calgary, Alberta**. Usually cougars (mountain lions) stay out of sight near humans, but this big cat hasn't. The campground remains open, but guests are advised to be on the alert.

When Michael Korn died last May, no one in his family wanted to take over the operation of his 91-site campground near **Walkill, N.Y.** Now the town has stepped up to the plate and offered to buy the property and lease it out to someone who will continue to operate it. Fears were developers would sweep up the property for a subdivision.

A bear, enticed by campers fixing s'mores, met its end in **Winter Park, Colo.**, over Labor Day weekend. A camping group said the bear came into their site and started into their food supplies. One man took his gun and "fired two warning shots." Apparently the bear didn't get the message, and the third round felled the bear. No citations will be issued.

John Holod of **RV Adventure Videos** is holding his end-of-summer sale where his entire set of 10 RV travel adventure DVDs is available for \$50, about half their regular price. The special offer includes his popular titles on RVing the Alaska Highway and Route 66. To order, call him at 313-510-2350. The sale ends September 26. For more information on each DVD visit [RVAdventureVideos.com](http://RVAdventureVideos.com).

Too good to be true: A **North Carolina** woman should have known better when she bought a 1997 Hornet camper for just \$100. The "salesman," a 17-year-old boy, claimed it belonged to him and he had the keys to prove it. The real owner of the rig ran into the new "owner" when she came to clean the rig.

Goldilocks, RV style: A **Seward, Alaska** man returned to his travel trailer after work only to find someone had broken into his rig through a roof vent

and had eaten some of his food. Topping it off, the miscreant, identified by police as Adelia Gutierrez, was found sleeping in the man's bed. No word if the food was porridge.

## RVing Tip of the Day

### **The dirty dog and the locked door**

*by Steve Savage, Mobility RV Service*

No, this post is not about a dog eating anyone's homework. I had an RV service call, all because a large boxer had jumped up and switched the dead bolt on the door. The owners were outside and, sure enough, they didn't have their keys with them.

**Now, if you happen to get locked out of your RV**, or simply lose your keys, here are some things that might help. First of all, do not try to force the door with a screwdriver or crowbar. Yes, it will work, but it also will bend the edge of the door, and that edge is all but impossible to straighten.

If you have locked the door using only the upper lock, many RV technicians and dealerships have master keys and can open that lock. It is unlikely you will have success using someone else's key, although it is a remote possibility.

**If you have locked the bottom lock**, which is the dead bolt, master keys do not work (at least not any I have seen) — so now what? Even when you are locked out via the dead bolt, I normally can open the door and it will take me longer to get the tool I need off my truck than to open the door. I am not going to go into detail about how to do this, as I know there are bad people who search the Internet and try to find new ways to do bad things. Most technicians know how to do the same thing and although you will not walk away free-of-charge, the cost will be dramatically less than replacing the door.

Or how about a spare key in your wallet?

## Lessons Learned From Full-Time RVing

By Jaimie Hall Bruzenak

Our RV friend Lloyd wrote in his "Wanderin' Blog" about lessons he's learned as a full-time RVer. He has a good list. I especially like "don't make reservations or commitments." Inevitably, you'll end up rushing and leaving a good place before you want to. It happened in the first month of hitting the road plus many times since! We've always regretted it.

So, what additional things did I learn?

- 1. You can support yourself on the road.** Bill and I had to work as we left at age 47. There are so many jobs for the RVer, you can always find something to supplement income or provide a free or low-cost site while in the area.
- 2. Slow down.** When you first begin full-time RV travel, it is tempting to try to see it all. That means moving every day or two to cover the miles and get from one place to another.
- 3. Stay a while in one place.** This a corollary to the previous one. It is a more relaxing pace and you get time to actually see things. If you are

visiting a national park, you can get an overview the first day, but come back and do a hike or two or visit an outlying area in the park.

**4. Full-time RVing means freedom.** RVers have so many choices that people in stick-bound houses do not have. If you don't like the area move. If you are near a barking dog or the weather turns cold -or hot- move to a new place. You can leave a job if things get bad.

**5. You can live more cheaply.** A full-time RVer has much more control of her budget, especially if you own your RV outright and are out of debt. You can boondock on public lands in the West at no charge. You need less "stuff" and that includes clothes. When do you plan to wear that business suit? T-shirts and jeans or shorts are the usual uniform. Again, it's about choice.

**6. Visiting family is (more) fun.** Since you are bringing your own house, you have space when you want and need it. Many families will still try to get you to stay inside their house, but politely decline. Why pack a suitcase to go a few feet? You do have a real bed! And you won't wake anyone if you go for a snack.

**7. RVing can be the vehicle to make your dreams come true.** Going to Alaska was the big dream for me. Bill and I worked there for two seasons, opening doors to experiences like kayaking in Glacier Bay and riding the White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad that I hadn't even considered before. Kayaking among porpoises and whales was a high point in my life. Last summer, I finally checked Niagra Falls off my list.

The full-time RV lifestyle is affordable and leads to adventures you've probably never even imagined. It's not for everyone, but don't let fears and money hold you back.

Jaimie Hall Bruzenak is an RV Lifestyle Expert. She has been RVing since 1992. She and her late husband weren't retired so RVED on a budget and worked on the road. She is the author of Support Your RV Lifestyle! An Insider's Guide to Working on the Road and other RV books.

## Basic Guide to RV Internet Access for RVers on the Road

by Steven Fletcher

Giving up a foundation house for one with wheels, a motorhome, travel trailer or fifth wheel, generally means giving up easy reliable internet access. For most of us it is a matter of getting internet access wherever and however we can. Fortunately, RVers are a resourceful group and have found creative ways to get access. Wi-Fi, Cellular data devices and two-way satellite make it easy.

### Cellular Internet Access

All cellular providers offer some sort of internet access called Data Plans. Plans, prices and coverage vary with each provider... sometimes considerably... which can make choosing a provider and plan difficult.

While many RVers are still using a tethered phone to access the internet, it's getting more difficult for new data plan users to do so. The Cellular providers are slowly discontinuing cellphone models that have the capability in order to switch customers over to data plans that require the use of a cellular WiFi device or USB adaptor. Owners of simple cell phones, rather than smartphones, are unable to access the internet either

way.

Tethering kits for some cell phones may still be available at cellular phone stores but you should know if one is available for the phone you plan to buy before you buy the kit or the phone. Most any PC laptop will work with the tethering kits available but you may want to make sure.

As stated earlier, these days the trend is toward a separate device, either a WiFi device or USB adapter with the accompanying data plan. While this option is more expensive than the previous described tethered method there is an advantage to the data plans in that they allow you to be connected anytime so no waiting for evenings or weekends for free minutes. The WiFi devices will let multiple computers to connect to the internet at the same time. (See WiFi Internet Access below for more on this) The downside is the initial cost for the device and the monthly plan fee which is in addition to your voice plan.

### **WiFi Internet Access**

WiFi stands for Wireless Fidelity. It's also known as 802.11 and we Macintosh users call it AirPort. Whatever you call it Wi-Fi is basically a two-way radio with about a 300 foot range and software that sends and receives standard internet data.

For RVers with older laptop the Wi-Fi radio usually takes the form of a \$50 - \$100 PC card that plugs into the PCMCIA slot. But for the last several years manufacturers have built WiFi technology into laptops.

Places where internet access is provided by Wi-Fi are generally called hotspots and hotspots are being set up in tens of thousands of new places every year. Restaurants, coffee shops, convenience stores, hotels, motels, airports, even truck stops. Just about anyplace where people congregate is likely to have a hotspot in the next few years. Of special interest to RVers is that many RV parks are providing Wi-Fi.

A WiFi hotspot is what makes a wireless connection to the internet possible. But the hotspot itself must have an internet service provider connection. This connection is usually made using DSL or cable but in remote areas the connection could be satellite. In rare cases internet service could be cellular or even another WiFi link.

With a cellular WiFi device and Data Plan, RVers will have their own personal hotspot as long as a cell signal is available.

Some hotspots are pay-for-service and the fees charged by these hotspot vary widely but the trend is toward free access. Be sure to ask the RV park if the WiFi is free or paid before you make your reservation if this is important to you.

Free hotspots are often offered by public agencies... libraries, schools, parks, etc. In many areas, users themselves are working together to provide free hotspots to the community. Free hotspots are also offered by businesses that feel the service sets them apart from their competition and attracts customers.

As with other hotspots, some RV parks and campgrounds will charge for WiFi service and others will offer it free.

There is more than one Wi-Fi standard... the older 'b' and 'g' and the current standard is "n". The 'n' standard offers better security and faster speed but it is backward compatible with the 'b' and 'g' standards.

Don't let the different standards bother you too much though. Most hotspots will accept all 802.11 standards for the foreseeable future and any "n" gear you have will work with any 'b' or 'g' hotspot. Fact is, you're not likely to ever notice the difference.

## Satellite Internet Access

There are two types of satellite internet systems of interest to RVers, rooftop auto-pointed and tripod mounted manually pointed.

The auto-pointed systems are available through re-sellers who install the system and provide value-added service using one of the satellite service providers. Cost is between \$4,500 and \$7,500 for the system and installation. Service is around \$90 per month.

The manually pointed tripod systems are sold by installer agents of the satellite service providers.

The installers then combine the satellite equipment used by the provider of choice and all the necessary equipment to make it a 'mobile' system. These mobile kits vary from installer to installer so be sure you get a list of all the parts they include and compare. Just as important is the training the installer provides. Again it varies from installer to installer. Make sure you'll get hands-on training and at least some telephone support. Cost for the equipment and training can run \$1,500. Monthly service is \$50 to \$60 depending on the provider.

There really isn't a whole lot to distinguish the satellite service providers as far as the kind of service and speed of the connection. The differences are small and subjective.

The reality is, with some many RV parks and campgrounds offering WiFi and many RVers opting for cellular data devices and plans, the use of satellite internet among RVers is dropping and is now only of interest to die-hard boondockers.

## Air Safe Hitches

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## Our 2015 Mobile App Essentials for RV Travel

As Technomads, it should be no surprise that we are mobile technology lovers.

We love our iPhones and iPads, and find them to be perfect companions for our full time travels.

There is something magical about having the Internet in your pocket, a world's worth of maps on your lap, email and messaging always with you, music and video on demand, and an abundance of incredible apps that every day make our devices ever more useful tools for facilitating our adventures.

And it's rumored that smartphones can actually makes phone calls too.

We use a lot of apps on a daily basis – from productivity tools for running our business from everywhere, to photo processing, to social networking, and even the occasional game.

Today we're going to update you on the apps we find ourselves loading up most frequently directly related to our RVing travels.

Please note that aside from the apps we created ourselves, we paid for all of the apps and these are unsolicited reviews. Just our honest opinions. But, if you do opt to buy any of these apps off our recommendations, some links below are iTunes affiliate links and we will get a tiny cut.

While we are strictly an Apple household, if the app has versions for other mobile device platforms we've listed them too.

### **Apps for finding RV Parks & Campgrounds**

There still does not seem to be one single app that finds all campgrounds – but there are some very useful resources out there. We find ourselves using a combination of apps depending on the situation and type of camping or overnight parking we're looking for.

**Camp & RV: ALLSTAYS:** This is the ultimate RVing resource guide for finding not only campgrounds, but other RV services and overnight stops. Its campground database is now over 29,000 listings and includes RV resorts, military FamCamps, public campgrounds, overnight parking options (including which Walmarts you can't stay overnight at), etc. It also includes places that service RVs, dump stations, propane fills and service centers. In addition, it has low clearance bridges marked, rest areas, road grades, construction alerts and tracks some of the basic state laws. Updates are free for the life of the product, and they seem to regularly improve and add content. They have other versions as well that provide subsets of their data, for instance if you want the list of Walmarts only, and offer an online subscription option. **Alternatives:** RVParky and RVParking both have free apps worthwhile having too.

**Ultimate US Public Campground Project :** This app has become our go-to source for finding public campground options, which is our general preference. It currently has listings for over 20,000 state parks, national parks, municipal parks, COE, BLM lands and more. We find the information, particularly pricing, can be a bit out of date – but it's an excellent resource. You can also use the online version for free, download the Mac app or a POI database for your GPS.

**US Public Lands** While this app doesn't list specific camping locations, it overlays BLM, Forest Service, NPS and public land boundary maps. Helping you utilize US national resources! We use it for helping scout out boondocking opportunities that might not be listed elsewhere.

**Passport America** If you're a Passport America member, this app is a no-brainer to have on your mobile device for quickly searching if there are member clubs on your route. We've used this several times in planning our routing and enroute stops. If you're not a Passport America member, we highly recommend it. The club gets you access to 50% discounts at RV Parks across the country, and the \$44 annual membership price will pay for itself with just a couple nights stays. We love the club, and utilize their campgrounds when making transitions between our destinations to dump/fill tanks and recharge.

### **Navigating to Get There**

We've tried a lot of navigation apps and devices out over the years, but we just use the built in map apps on our iPads and iPhones. Here are the navigation apps we use and like:

**Apple's Maps** The default maps program by Apple is actually pretty good. It has turn by turn directions, satellite views, voice response via Siri and more. This is usually the first app we load for getting general directions.

**Google Maps** We also love the Google Maps and generally are running this along side Apple Maps. It's fun when Apple and Google's direction disagree with each other.

**InRoute** This app helps us optimize our driving day, by scouting out ahead for elevation changes, curviness, weather conditions and things along our route. We plug in our destination for the day ahead, and know before we head out which routes to take to avoid adverse conditions. We love the elevation profiles it gives us, so we can avoid routes we don't feel like crossing.

**Co-Pilot** We keep this app around, which has the option of offline maps that don't need to be downloaded – just in case we end up in an area without good cellular coverage. It's free to download, but maps will cost about \$10 to download. These days, with great cellular coverage and on device map caching – we find we rarely need to revert to this option, but it's nice to know it's there.

### **Stuff Along the Way**

There are a lot of apps out there for helping you out while you're in transit – from finding fuel, tracking your adventures and finding cool stuff. Here are some of our favorites that we find ourselves defaulting to often:

**RoadTrippers** Looking for cool stuff to do along the way? The Roadtrippers website and apps are a pretty cool way to seek out things – from tourist attractions, dining options, scenic spots and even some limited RV Park listings.

**GasBuddy** Want to find the cheapest fuel prices? GasBuddy is your app. You can view user submitted fuel prices to help locate the cheapest places to fill up. But, as it's user submitted information – do use caution. Some listings even include photos so that you can determine if the station is RV-friendly.

**RoadTrip** We use this fantastic app to track our fuel fill-ups, fuel economy and maintenance logs & costs for both our RV and our toad. It allows you to quickly create custom snapshots of your expenses (such as 'Repositioning from California to Texas, Spring 2015'). It even gives us a break out of what our costs are on a daily and per mile basis.

**SaniDumps** "When RVs Have to Go..." – as the app creator says. The Sanidumps website provides a map locator for RV Dump Stations, and provides this free companion app. The app's interface is a bit non-intuitive and doesn't seem to refresh as you scroll around the map – but it can be a useful way to find dump stations in addition to AllStays.

**Alternative:** RVDumpSites.Net – While they don't offer a mobile app, this website also contains listings of dump stations across the US.

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