

Subject:

March 2020 Newsletter from Air Safe Hitches

March 2020

Newsletter

3/3/2020

Scouting Back Roads Using Google Earth

by Dave Helgeson - Adventures in RVing FEBRUARY 21, 2020

A reoccurring question during my boondocking seminars and responses to some of my blog posts is, "Do you physically survey (walk/drive) road conditions leading to a boondocking site before heading in with your RV?"

I typically reply that I am so comfortable with what I have researched in advance concerning road conditions that I rarely walk or drive the road (without the RV in tow) before proceeding with my travel trailer.

In this and the next several posts, I will be sharing the items I look for online before ever leaving the asphalt and heading down a "less improved" road to a boondock site.

In this entry, we will share what to look for using the satellite view on Google Earth.

I start by locating a boondocking site near the location/activity I want to enjoy. These sites show up where the natural vegetation has been disturbed (on public land) from years of vehicle use/parking and most often you will also be able to discern a fire ring made of rocks.

From the boondocking site, I work back towards the asphalt where I will be turning off the main road. Things I look for along the route are:

1. Sharp curves in the road that would be difficult to navigate.
2. Gradient—I run the cursor along the road to watch the elevation listed at the bottom of the screen to determine what the gradient of the road is and if there are any major dips or humps that might challenge the clearance of my truck or travel trailer.
3. The distance I will have to travel to get to the boondocking site from the main road using either the "Ruler" found in Tools or the scale located in the bottom left corner.
4. The width of the road using the scale as noted above.
5. How well the road is maintained or maybe isn't maintained. Signs that it is maintained include lack of grass and/or weeds growing down the center of the road tell me it is most likely graded on a regular basis and well-traveled. Uniform shoulders and width also serve as indicators that the road is graded regularly.
6. What are the options for turning around along the route (if needed)?
7. Drainages/creek crossings/washouts/swales.
8. Initial access—I look at the turnoff from the asphalt to see if there might be a gate that will be indicated by a line across the road with a parallel shadow, which tells me the line is elevated above the road (as it is casting a shadow). Note: If on public land, it may only be a cattle gate keeping livestock on leased grazing lands often found in the West. The universal rule concerning gates is leave the gate as you found it (or leave

all gates as found) is an important rule of courtesy in rural areas throughout the world. If a gate is found open, it should be left open, and if it is closed, it should be left closed (after passing through).

9. Is there brush encroaching the road or are there trees overhanging the road that might damage my RV?
10. Does the road start out as surfaced (chip sealed or paved) and then turn to dirt/gravel farther along the route?
11. Are there any user-posted pictures, indicated by blue circles, along the back road I plan to travel that depict the actual road?
12. As you can see, a little advance research can provide a wealth of information concerning road conditions to a boondocking site long before you ever arrive to navigate the road in your RV.
13. Please note that I have been towing trailers before I was old enough to obtain a driver's license and I have more ground clearance than most RVs, so I might be more confident than other RVers. If you are in doubt about access road conditions I encourage you to survey the road before proceeding with your RV.
14. In the next installment, we will look at using Google Earth street view to provide us clues to access road conditions. Traveling a back road to a boondocking site with confidence, just another adventure in RVing!

Why You Should Become A Better Dry Camper

by Dave Helgeson - Adventures in RVing - FEBRUARY 7, 2020

I recently visited a Washington State Park and was greeted with a sign in the window of the closed attendant's booth that said: "There Are No Utility Sites Available."

Now, through the years, I have traveled miles to a campground hoping to find a campsite only to be discouraged when I encountered the "Campground Full" sign posted at the entrance. But would an RVer drive miles to reach a first-come, first-serve campground just to turn around and head elsewhere because there are no utility sites available?

For me, I am happy to find a spot, any spot, available when I pull into a campground these days. After talking with others, and reading online posts and surveys, I learned that I'm in the minority when it comes to utilities not being a necessity, especially electricity, as some surveys reveal nearly 75% of RVers feel they must have an electrical hookup.

Yes, even I, a dyed in the wool boondocker, would prefer an electric site, especially in cold or very hot weather, but I would never head down the road if one were not available.

That is why I am writing this blog entry to encourage you to become a better dry camper and avoid the disappointment you must experience when arriving at a campground and discovering there are no utility sites available. Trust me, most any RV will operate a night or two without hookups in moderate weather conditions.

By becoming a better dry camper, you have much more flexibility on where you can camp. With flexibility comes freedom, allowing you to pretty much go where you want when you want. Isn't that what RVing was meant to be? Surveys show that thousands of designated (non-utility) campsites remain vacant every night, even in the busiest season, due to RVers perceived need of utilities.

On top of the thousands of non-utility campsites that remain vacant, tens of thousands of other potential sites (dispersed camping locations, boat launches, city parks, points of interest, fairgrounds, and other legal places to camp) remain underutilized due to the fact they require RVers to dry camp.

I have shared with you the "why" part of becoming a better dry camper, but for the "how" part, you can search online, especially through my older blog posts where I have shared how to determine your power needs, conserve water, how to recharge your batteries, find potable water, and other useful dry camping skills.

Is there a green way to tow?

BY JANE MCGRATH

You may do your part every day to watch your step on the environment and avoid leaving a carbon footprint. But some days, going green is harder than others. Sure, you may recycle your grocery bags, ride the bus to work and buy organic, but when green guilt starts foiling your vacation plans, who's to say where to draw the line?

After waiting all year to take your new boat out, it strikes you that towing it for the long trip will effectively drop an anvil on your hybrid car's sky-high MPG. Not only do you feel your wallet shrinking by the second, but your green conscience is now burdened with the guilt that your vacation will now sap up gas and release carbon emissions.

Should you shed that shiny new boat from your vacation plans? Or is there a greener way to tow short of going Flintstones-style and literally pulling our own weight? The heavier the load on a vehicle, the more power, and therefore fuel, it will need to move. Nevertheless, although hybrid cars aren't known for their heavy towing capacities, you shouldn't necessarily feel pressured to forego the boat or the trailer for fear of green guilt.

In fact, as stellar gas mileage becomes more popular among consumers, companies seeking the green market are working to equip towing vehicles with higher MPGs. Ford, for example, promises about 20 MPG for its 2009 F-150 truck [source: Carty]. Likewise, companies seeking the blue-collar, boating and camping markets are working to equip hybrids with better towing capacities. For instance, GMC has come out with a 2009 Yukon Hybrid that can tow up to 6,000 pounds (2721.6 kilograms) [source: Edmunds]. These kinds of options are ideal for a person who wants one vehicle to drive to work on a daily basis and economically handle towing a trailer on the annual road trip.

There's no reason you should feel powerless in the plight to save gas with that boat in tow. By becoming a smarter consumer and a smarter driver, your towing vehicle can be an efficient green machine. We'll go over some of the most important tips for better towing gas mileage next.

Fortunately, there are ways you can indulge your love of the outdoors or boating without sacrificing green ideals. Consider these tips to conserve gas while towing.

First and foremost, experts recommend to get rid of any excess weight you may be carrying in your vehicle you probably won't need. Tow more weight, and you'll consume more fuel. So go Thoreau and "simplify, simplify."

AirSafeHitches.com



We carry the largest selection of AIRSAFE™ Hitches, 5th Wheels, Goosenecks, and Receivers.

Check out our Hitches and Prices

[Receiver Hitches](#)

[5th Wheel Hitches](#)

[Gooseneck Hitches](#)

"Buy from us and save"

Accessories Available

[Receiver](#)
[5th Wheel](#)

AirSafe Hitches

[Videos](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

What is typically the "weakest link" in a tow vehicle?

BY CRISTEN CONGER

There are multiple components of a vehicle and a trailer that go into towing. You have axles, hitches, bearings, mirrors, transmissions and so on. It's a surprisingly intricate orchestra of parts and measurements that must meld together harmoniously to transport your load safely. But like most ensembles, someone strikes a sour note at some point -- a bassoon out of tune or missed piano note. When towing, the cost of a weak link is far greater than a harsh tone in the ear. It could mean a ruined boat, wrecked camper or worse.

In some ways, the weakest link in a towing vehicle is you. This isn't meant to get your spirits down before hitching up the trailer for a fishing weekend at the lake. It's simply a reality check. The most common cause of trailer-related accidents is driver error [source: Sunrise Trailer Sales]. Maybe your collection of motocross bikes has exceeded your vehicle's cargo weight limit. Or perhaps you didn't take the time to properly distribute the load over the tire axles. And of course, we can't forget the inherent difficulties of driving a car or truck with a trailer attached. Simply getting down the road scot-free can be as tricky as carrying a large box through a crowded hallway without hitting other people.

That's why it's imperative to take your time when it comes to towing. Check out 10 Towing Risks to Keep in Mind to get a grip on the safety basics. Consult your owner's manual for your vehicle and trailer to brush up on weight restrictions and recommended maintenance schedules. Before hitting the open road, practice driving with your loaded trailer in an empty parking lot to ensure that you can manage it.

While driver preparation is important, what part of the towing vehicle should you keep a special eye out for? Is there an Achilles heel in towing? Wear and tear from towing activities will affect different trailers and vehicles in different ways. However, the trailer tires are especially susceptible to failure. The BoatU.S. Trailering Club receives more than 100 assistance requests every month regarding flat trailer tires [source: BoatU.S.].

If you don't inflate your tires enough, the pressure from the load can lead to blowouts. When that happens, it could cause the trailer to sway -- which can affect your steering control. On the other hand, pumping up a tire too much reduces the traction between rubber and road, diminishing your braking control [source: RV Advice]. And remember that even when not in use, tires steadily lose air pressure with time.

Like your towing vehicles, tires have load ratings you should adhere to. Putting too much load on top of a tire opens the door for a flat. For that reason, consult your tire's ratings and distribute your cargo as evenly as possible across the tire axles. Once you know how much the tires can support, check the tire air pressure. Each tire should be equally inflated. Try to measure it only while the tire is cold or hasn't moved more than a mile recently. When the tire has been in use, a hot reading will underestimate your air pressure.

How to Turn While Towing

BY SCOTT C. BENJAMIN

For most drivers, simply keeping a car or truck moving straight down the highway doesn't require much effort. Add a trailer to the equation, and the same task becomes a bit more difficult. Acceleration slows down, braking distances stretch out, and even the vehicle's steering feels a little different. But perhaps one of the most dramatic differences that a driver will experience is when turning while towing.

Depending on a number of variables, such as whether you typically drive in a rural or urban setting or the average distance that you drive, you may be required to make dozens of turns every time you get behind the wheel. After a while, you probably don't give turning much thought at all. It's just something every driver deals with -- it becomes second nature.

Turning while towing a trailer is another story altogether. What was once a rather simple undertaking -- an ordinary right- or left-hand turn -- now becomes a task that requires a bit of advanced planning on the part of the driver. It may sound a little dramatic, but until you've actually been in the position of having to negotiate your way around a crowded street corner while towing a trailer, it's difficult to accurately describe the feeling. A veteran trailer driver, although still cautious, might be a bit more at ease in that situation, but it wouldn't be a stretch to say that a rookie driver would likely feel some anxiety and maybe even a little fear as he or she approaches that same turn.

Why the trepidation over a simple turn? What's the difference if you have a trailer attached to your vehicle? On the next page, we'll find out why turning while towing can cause even an experienced driver to grip the wheel just a little bit harder.

Turning while towing isn't impossible, but it can be rather difficult, even for an experienced driver. One of the most important points to keep in mind when you're turning while towing a trailer is that you must take turns significantly wider than you typically would. It's always a good idea to give yourself plenty of extra room for turning when you're towing. The outside edge of the trailer has to clear all curbside hazards while turning. Objects like mailboxes, street signs, other vehicles or even people can get in the way of a turning trailer.

The tires should also be a consideration. It doesn't matter what type of trailer you're pulling -- the trailer's tires will track toward the inside of the turn radius much more than the tires of the tow vehicle [source: RV Towing Tips]. To describe it in simpler terms, the trailer will always cut the corner sharper than the tow vehicle will, so the wider you can swing around a turn, the better the chances are that the trailer will make it around the corner unscathed.

The same tire tracking principles apply to the trailer as the speeds increase, but to a lesser extent. For example, if the trailer is being pulled through a series of turns at higher speeds, it would be a wise decision to keep the tow vehicle toward the outside edge of the turn radius (yet remaining safely within your lane) since the trailer tires will track closer toward the inside of the turn. The trailer tires will always track more to the inside of the turn at slower speeds and always track less to the inside of the turn at higher speeds [source: RV Towing Tips]. Either way, the trailer needs additional room for turning, so you should always be prepared to adjust accordingly.

Aside from planning ahead and giving yourself as much room as possible to make wide turns, there is one more turning while towing tip that anyone pulling a trailer might find helpful: Watch your mirrors. As elementary as this towing tip may seem, it's a point that can often be overlooked by novice drivers. If your mirrors are adjusted properly, they can show you exactly where your trailer is headed and where the trailer wheels are right now. They can also give you an overall sense of how to correct, if necessary.

Turning while towing doesn't have to be difficult; in fact, it may become relatively simple once you're familiar with the way the tow vehicle and trailer handle a turn. Just remember to have the foresight to plan for the corner early. Give yourself more room than you think you'll need, and don't forget to watch your mirrors. Practice helps, too, so bear in mind that every difficult turning maneuver that you make while towing is just another valuable learning experience.

Adding your RV to a Car policy may cost you more than Specialized RV Coverage.

From the Quirky to the Commonplace, Progressive Warns Many Mishaps Not Covered by Common Car Policies; Urges Considering Specialized RV Insurance

Imagine leaving your RV set up at a campsite and returning to find that a family of bears has moved in and, because they weigh hundreds of pounds and are not the best housekeepers, the RV is torn apart. Or accidentally flooding your neighbor's coach with "black water" by mistakenly hooking your water connections up to the trailer next door. These incidents may sound far-fetched, but they actually happened to Progressive customers. Fortunately for them, they were covered because they had specialized RV insurance, but a lot of RVers wouldn't be.

"Some people make the mistake of adding their RV onto their car insurance policy, only to find out too late that the car policy doesn't cover a lot of things that can go wrong in an RV," said Cathy Pelfrey, RV product manager, Progressive. "An RV is much more than a car—it's a house on wheels. So an RVer really needs a specialized policy that covers more than what standard car insurance covers."

As the number one brand of RV insurance sold through independent insurance agents in the country, Pelfrey says Progressive has seen its share of oddball claims over the years, as well as everyday mishaps that may be excluded from standard auto coverage. For example, if your RV is damaged during a trip, an auto policy could leave you out in the cold but Progressive's RV insurance would pay up to \$2,000 for lodging and transportation so you could still enjoy your vacation. Similarly, expensive items like outdoor gear, laptops or other electronics stolen from inside your RV would be covered by an RV policy but typically would not be covered by an auto policy.

Specialized RV insurance coverage can also protect you against depreciation if your RV is totaled. A car insurance policy could only pay the RV's actual cash value, but an RV Agreed Value policy would pay the amount that you and the insurance company agreed the RV was worth when you bought the policy, regardless of the RV's value at the time of the loss.

"We're sharing this information about claims and coverages because we want RVers to understand what their policies cover and to make sure they have the protection that best meets their individual needs," said Pelfrey.

While RV insurance covers most of what can go wrong in an RV, there are exceptions. Take the case of the customer who let his motor home fall into such disrepair that the roof seals were leaking, resulting in a small forest of mushrooms growing underneath his couch. Because RVers are required to maintain their coaches, this claim was denied.

RVing With Your Pet: Three Common Dangers

RV camping is a fun way to relax for RVers and their pets. However, there are dangers that need to be guarded against if one wishes to avoid having their pleasant trip marred. By simply knowing the dangers and the simple steps to guarding against them, a diligent pet owner can avoid misery, and a faithful pet can avoid harm. Three common dangers follow.

Disease

Perhaps the top danger of the road is disease. Regardless of what type of pet a person brings with them, that pet comes in contact with a wide variety of germs, most of which the pet's immune system has no resistance against. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to completely circumvent this danger, especially with animals like dogs, which tend to have a very curious nature. The best a watchful owner can do is make certain that the drinking water and food being supplied is fortified with vitamins and minerals. Many brands of pet food offer 'Immunity' lines, which offer food especially designed to enhance the pet's immune system. This does not

mean that it is permissible for a pet owner to neglect their pet's health; animals should still be kept under a watchful eye, especially when in outdoor areas, and animal feces should be cleaned quickly from the RV, or other areas where the pet might stay. It is also important that owners know where the nearest vet is in the event of a pet emergency.

Aggressive Behavior

A close second in way of dangers is other animals. While any animal can be targeted by aggression from strays, predators, or prey, dogs and cats that have not been neutered are most susceptible to the dangers of other animals of the same species, as they tend to attract members of the opposite gender. This can lead to complications such as pregnancy in female animals, or fights for dominance in the case of male animals. In order to circumvent this, it is highly advisable that road-ready pet owners make a point of spaying or neutering their pets. If this is not a viable action, use excessive restraint and caution when in areas that other animals frequent. With all pets, neutered or natural, it is advisable to keep them on leashes, and keep a close eye on all suspicious activities within the surrounding area. An alert owner is often the best preventative measure against harm to their pet.

Dehydration

Finally, the third most prevalent danger on the road is dehydration. While the air conditioning may make an RV comfortable while people are in it, many turn off the engine to save gas and battery life while inside stores, or stopped for the night. At times, this can create an extremely hot and dry atmosphere, causing havoc on a pet's body. Any time a pet must be left alone in an RV, it is important to make sure that they have plenty of water available. To this end, non-spill designed bottles are often recommended.

Contact Us

Air Safe Hitches
264 Lincoln Ave
Island arkh, New York | 11558
Tel. 321-939-2132
Fax. 866-201-3391
airsafehitches.com

Follow Us



Unsubscribe

This email is intended for lstegemann@ecpcinc.com.
[Update your preferences](#) or
[Unsubscribe](#)

