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Newsletter

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As Travel Returns, Get Ready for 'Summer of the RV'

By: RVBusiness|Published on: May 13, 2020

Some folks, well, some folks just like taking matters into their own hands. And, according to a Tuesday (May 12) report by travelpulse.com, putting them on the steering wheel.

As the coronavirus continues to wreak havoc on the industry, the demand for travel is slowly — slowly — creeping back up again. But many remain wary of getting on a plane, a train or a cruise ship and being packed tightly in with strangers, never knowing if everybody is going to be wearing a mask, never knowing if somebody is unknowingly carrying the virus, never knowing if a flight is going to be empty enough for social distancing — or perhaps not.

Welcome to what could be the year of the Recreational Vehicle, more commonly known as the beloved RV.

With experts predicting that any return to travel will likely start with short, domestic trips, the RV could, literally, become the go-to vehicle for travel this summer. Though the outlook for RV sales entering the year was grim — 504,000 RVs were sold in 2017 and that number slipped to 364,000 last year — many dealers across the country are reporting an unexpected uptick in sales.

In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo began a phased-in approach to reopening the state to business, and one of his first directives was to allow car and RV dealerships to conduct on-site visits from potential customers, albeit by appointment only and not walk-in. Still, it was welcome news.

"Getting the news that we can open by appointment only and start bringing in some essential people back to assist with that is the news that we are going in the right direction," said Jason Rattray, general manager of Alpin Haus RV Dealership Group in Amsterdam, N.Y.

Rattray says, when it comes to selling an RV, it is all about the in-person experience.

"It's hard to really get a feel for what the RV layout is from looking at pictures and videos. I think a lot of it is just the feeling when you get inside and start to take mental ownership of certain spaces," he said.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has warned that "Traveling by RV means you may have to stop less often for food or bathrooms, but RV travelers typically have to stop at RV parks overnight and other public places to get gas and supplies. These stops may put you and those with you in the RV in close contact with others who could be infected."

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Get Ready for the Summer of the RV

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And putting them on the steering wheel.

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Shannon Nills, owner of Guaranty RV in Eugene, Oregon, told KMTR-TV that he sold 52 units the first weekend in May and “that’s almost double what we sell in a given weekend.” Sutton RV in Eugene is also seeing this soar in customers. General manager Lisa Bottorff says traffic on their website has more than tripled.

“Interest has increased tremendously; some people are making appointments, some people are coming in physically,” Bottorff said.

It’s a trend that’s playing out nationwide, says LCI Industries’ CEO Jason Lippert. His company supplies highly engineered components for the leading original equipment manufacturers in the recreation and transportation product markets.

“RVs and boats provide attractive alternatives to vacation more safely as families are eager to get out of the house,” Lippert told Fox Business. “At the same time, RVing and boating offer a great solution to social distancing for families that want to travel the country and experience the great outdoors. Air travel, cruise ships and hotels are likely going to be less popular, at least in the near term. As a result, the outdoor recreational products business is expected to accelerate.”

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Craig Kirby, President of the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA), told Forbes

magazine that RVing offers a sense of independence not found elsewhere.

“Americans love the space and freedom of the outdoors and the enrichment that comes with living an active outdoor life. RVs not only enable this lifestyle; they also provide a self-contained existence that other forms of travel don’t allow,” Kirby said.

He continued, “After an indeterminate period of isolation, we believe families will be more enthusiastic than ever to get outside and see new places, even within their own states. RV travel allows people to sleep in their own bed, cook gourmet meals, and control where they go. Once federal and state restrictions are lifted, they’ll be able to experience the endless range of outdoor wonders throughout the country and the freedom of independent travel that RVs offer. This includes the option to forego a campground since RVs have everything a family needs to camp remotely.”

Kirby called RVs the ultimate self-contained units. Some, in fact, are designed to be completely self-contained with generators, solar panels and laundry facilities, allowing RVers to live off-the-grid for weeks at a time.

“RVs provide travelers control: they allow people to travel where they want, when they want, and offer a unique travel experience that allows people to pursue their favorite activities and experience places in the country they may have only seen pictures of in a coffee table book or on Instagram,” Kirby said. “They can do this all with the ability to stay connected to family and friends. These are all positive features, but particularly attractive during this most unprecedented time. RVs provide a wonderful opportunity for people to continue to enjoy vacations with their families, while still adhering to social distancing, which will likely stay in place in some form for the foreseeable future.”

The Final Choice Depends on Your Situation

Many people confuse the terms “residence” and “domicile” so let’s begin by clarifying those terms. A residence is simply where you live for the time being. Some people have many residences, such as people who spend time on property they own in multiple states. The California RV park where I spend winter is one of my many residences as I travel around, but it’s definitely not my domicile.

A domicile is not just a temporary home base for full-time RVers. A domicile involves legal paperwork. This is why it’s a more complicated choice than where to park your home. The bureaucrats of this world force all of us to have an official domicile. Our domicile is the state in which we choose to file paperwork concerning our important legal affairs, like vehicle registration and tax filings.

We also need a verifiable domicile for public obligations, like jury duty. Once we choose a domicile, federal and state governments want us to prove that we always intend to live in that state for the majority of the year. We must do so in order to show that we’re not just calling that state our home in order to escape paying income or property taxes.

Proving our *intention* is even more complicated. This subject alone is fodder for a future blog post. We’ll get there eventually but right now we’ll examine the three most popular and best states for a full-time RVer domicile.

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The Three Best States for Full-time RVer Domiciles

The best states for full-time RVer domiciles generally come down to Texas, Florida or South Dakota. All three states are income tax-free, the government entities will accept mail-forwarding addresses and they are headquarters for mail-forwarding services. A full-timer's final choice of domicile usually comes down to a few important factors that affect a person's wallet:

- Health insurance options and premiums
- Vehicle licensing fees and annual inspection requirements
- Ease to [get mail on the road](#)
- If you're an entrepreneur, ease of running a business from that state is also a major factor.

What's right for one full-timer isn't always right for another. Like many things about this lifestyle, everyone's situation is different. Some of us are working, many of us are cashing social security checks. Some full-timers own property and have complicated estates. Others don't own anything more than what's stored in their rig. This is just a snapshot of how a person's financial picture affects their choice of a domicile.

Talking to other full-timers in discussion forums can get you thinking about which state you want to choose. Ultimately only you can decide which state works best for you. The good news is that if you choose a state and find out it doesn't work well in your situation, the U.S. grants us all the freedom to choose another domicile whenever we wish.

How Horse Trailer Towing Works

It's said that dogs are man's best friend. However, if you look back over time, you might argue that horses mean more to mankind than any other single group of animals. Horses were the main mode of transportation until more mechanical travel methods came about. Even after railroads and ships hit the scene, humans continued to rely on horses for work. Not only did humans use horses for transportation, they used them to power farm equipment as well. Why do you think we refer to mechanical power as horsepower?

Let's fast-forward to today. In many instances, horses are still used by ranchers and cattle farmers who work their land and corral animals for a living. In cities, however, horses no longer serve the same purposes. Sure, some cultures like the Mennonites still use horses in the traditional sense, but horse-drawn carriages and plows have been replaced by automobiles and tractors. That doesn't mean people don't still love their equine friends. People all over the world own horses for riding, racing or just to have on their land as a large pet. Unlike little Fido, though, horses can't jump in the backseat of your Honda Civic whenever you need to take them to the veterinarian.

Just about everyone has seen a horse trailer on the road. If you own horses, you've probably had your own horse transported in a trailer. Whatever the case, towing a horse trailer is unlike towing any other load. Horses are heavy. Worse yet, they move around. Have you ever wondered what it's like for horses riding in one of those things? This article aims to let you know. More importantly, this article outlines the proper procedures and special considerations you should take when transporting horses. Let's learn about some of the things we should never overlook when towing a horse trailer.

Horse Trailer Towing Tips

Whether you're towing a load of pine straw or livestock, you must always make sure you are using the right hitch. To determine the necessary hitch, you'll need to know your gross towing weight (the weight of the loaded trailer) and the tongue weight (the weight placed on the hitch). Consult the owner's manual of your towing vehicle as well as the specifications of your trailer. Remember, the maximum towing capacity can only be attained by using weight distributing hitches. These hitches require load bearing bars that distribute the trailer weight equally to the front and rear wheels.

You always should be aware of the sensitivity of your load when you tow a horse trailer. You aren't towing a fixed load; your horses are going to move around inside the trailer. Now, consider the scientific make-up of a horse's weight: The majority of a horse's weight is usually 4 feet (1 meter) or higher than the base of your trailer. This means your load will be top-heavy. That, coupled with the fact that horses move around to retain their balance, means your load will shift while you drive.

Some experts suggest riding in your horse trailer before using it to tow a horse. While it isn't recommended that you do this on a public road (as it is illegal for the most part), riding in the trailer will give you a better understanding of what your horse has to deal with. How do you make your horse more comfortable in such a cramped space? Make sure you always tie your horse to the inside of the trailer by their bridle so they don't attempt to turn around or stick their heads out any openings. Nobody wants to injure his or her horses. That's why it is imperative to remember that your horses will do what they need to in order to keep their balance.

Air Safe [Gooseneck Hitches](#) Customer comment: I now realize how bad our roads are! We had to pull our 45' Bloomer from San Antonio, Tx to Shelbyville, Tn at a speed well below any posted limit. Our pull truck is a Ford F-450, and the trucks springs responded and reacted to each of the roads rough spots and at times the occupants (my wife & I) literally were bounced off the seat and up to the ceiling of the truck!! The ride comparison of with and without the air ride hitch is like sleeping on a pillow-top mattress or trying to sleep on a trampoline while the kids are bouncing on it! Without a doubt, we will NEVER pull this horse trailer again with a standard hitch. The Air-Ride comfort, stability, safety and Indeed the lessening of fatigue while driving makes this the number one piece of equipment that should be standard on all large/heavy trailers. Kenneth

After you've secured your horses, drive a short distance at low speed and pull over to check everything out before hitting the road. As you're driving, keep in mind your load will shift. Turns are now especially crucial since your trailer is top-heavy as well. Brake early into turns and drive through them smoothly. Give your horses an opportunity to get their balance before you accelerate out of turns. Always keep ample distance between your vehicle and those in front of you.

Braking is another tricky proposition. You must give yourself more time to brake. Again, your horses will take care of itself as long as you don't make any drastic moves. In addition, always park your horse trailer on a level surface. Should you have to park on a slope, make sure you

properly chock your wheels and turn the front wheels in a direction that will hopefully slow a freewheeling vehicle.

Don't be duped by the maximum towing capacity. Make sure you understand the equipment you need and choose the appropriate hitch accordingly. If you don't use a weight distributed hitch, you are putting your horses' lives in danger. Always think about your horses and keep in mind that they aren't happy riding in an enclosed space. Brake early, give yourself time to make evasive maneuvers and don't be pressured to drive faster than what you feel is safe. It's OK to drive slowly. After all, the driver in the Honda Civic doesn't have 4,000 pounds (1,814 kilograms) of livestock depending on your safe driving.

How to Stay Safe on a Road Trip During Coronavirus Outbreak

If a long drive is necessary, good planning and sanitizing can help lower your risk
by Sarah Elizabeth Adler, **AARP**, Updated May 22, 2020

With summer on the horizon, tourist destinations nationwide are beginning to consider how to safely welcome visitors, and many people who've been at home since March to stop the spread of the coronavirus are hoping to go somewhere — anywhere — in the months ahead.

If you are planning a long driving trip and your region lifts its coronavirus-related restrictions, consider these tips from experts for staying safe and lowering your risk of getting sick both on and off the road.

Plan your route

Now more than ever, preparation is key. "Even if you've done this trip multiple times, you need to take the research a step further," says AAA spokesperson Jeanette Casselano. "You may run into some temporary closures."

Before you depart, map out the roadways you'll be taking and the states you'll be passing through — and be aware of any relevant travel advisories. Some states have announced changes to things like toll collection and rest-area food sales: Florida has suspended all in-person toll payment (meaning drivers without the appropriate electronic pass will be billed by mail), and Ohio service-area food courts have adjusted their operating hours.

The Federal Highway Administration maintains a directory of state transportation department websites, which should have the latest information about state-specific coronavirus-related changes, along with links to other state resources such as traffic and weather advisories.

Packing and sanitizing

After planning, get your supplies in order. This includes the essentials — bottled water, snacks, medications — but also products for keeping hands and surfaces clean and sanitized. Geriatrician June McKoy, associate professor of medicine at Northwestern Medicine, recommends packing hand sanitizer, disinfecting wet wipes, disposable gloves, sealable disposable plastic bags and tissues.

Good hygiene on the road is much like that at home (for instance, washing hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating and after using the restroom) but requires extra vigilance when it comes to high-traffic roadside stops such as gas stations and public bathrooms, McKoy says. She suggests that drivers wear disposable gloves while pumping gas, rather than worrying about wiping down the nozzle itself (after you're done, discard the gloves outside your car or seal them in a plastic bag for disposal later if a trash can isn't available).

In public restrooms, be careful not to touch fixtures like the faucet or door handle after washing your hands, which she says "defeats the purpose" of handwashing (instead, use a piece of tissue or paper towel to shield your hands after washing).

Another tip: Pay for gas with cards, not cash. This eliminates the face-to-face interaction necessary for a cash transaction, and cards — but not cash — can always be cleaned with a disinfectant wipe after use.

Dining

Restaurants in some states, including Georgia, Texas and Utah, are resuming dine-in service — but expect changes like limits on the number of guests allowed inside and extra space between tables. In states where a sit-down meal still isn't allowed, drive-through and takeout service are typically available instead, as are drive-through options at major chains such as McDonald's and Starbucks.

Sleeping

If you need to stay somewhere overnight, call ahead to confirm your reservation; some hotels have closed, especially in big tourist centers like Las Vegas. But many of the hotels from major chains that you'll find along highways — like Hilton, Hyatt and Best Western — are still operating.

Hotels are also rethinking their approach to sanitization and social distancing in light of the outbreak: Hilton, Hyatt and Airbnb have announced ramped-up cleaning and safety standards to be rolled out in the weeks and months to come, like the use of hospital-grade disinfectants and contactless guest check-in procedures.

The American Hotel & Lodging Association, an industry group, has also developed guidelines that outline stringent cleaning procedures for everything from elevator buttons to exercise equipment.

Still, echoing advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, McKoy recommends using your own sanitizing supplies on “high-touch” surfaces in your room. This includes wiping down exterior and interior doorknobs and handles; the TV remote and bathroom fixtures; and any surfaces on which you'll rest your belongings, like tabletops or the area around the bathroom sink.

For stays of more than one night, McKoy suggests contacting the front desk and asking to forgo housekeeping services, allowing you to control sanitization and limit the number of people who come in and out of your room during your stay.

RV Getaways May Be Ready To Rebound

What you need to know to take a vacation on wheels amid pandemic

by Jim Byers, AARP, May 22, 2020

Airlines are removing middle seats and requiring passengers to wear masks. Hotels are working with the likes of the Mayo Clinic to boost their health practices. It's anybody's guess when our favorite restaurants will reopen their dining rooms. But in this age of COVID-19, one segment of the travel industry might be poised for a strong rebound: the RV vacation.

Travel by RV is the one escape in which you can avoid airplanes, bypass interactions with people at hotels and, if you purchase or rent a vehicle with a kitchen, forget worrying about closed restaurants.

"When you rent an RV, you buy the groceries and you do most of the cooking. You control the experience," says James Ashurst, executive vice president of the RV Industry Association in Reston, Virginia.

"It gives you the comforts of a home or hotel but gives you space to breathe and properly socially distance," says Donna Wittwer, of Paradise Valley, Arizona, who has taken two RV trips with friends and family, the most recent with her husband and daughter to San Diego two years ago. "I'm definitely itching to do another trip after being in lockdown."

Where and how to rent an RV

If an RV (recreational vehicle) getaway sounds appealing, you will find numerous companies that rent these cruisers, from conventional RV dealerships to rental firms specializing in them. Among them are Cruise America, based in Mesa, Arizona, which both rents and sells RVs in 128 locations in the U.S. and Canada; and Outdoorsy, which rents privately owned RVs in 11 countries, including in the U.S. and Canada.

Companies try to make the process as uncomplicated as possible, with most delivering your vehicle to the location of your choice. "We make it as easy to rent an RV as it is to rent a car,"

says Michael Smalley, Cruise America's executive vice president.

And one need not take a long road trip with an RV rental. You can rent for as little as a two- to three-night minimum.

Plenty of vehicle options

The vast array of RVs to rent range from customized minivans tricked out with beds and small refrigerators to towable trailers and massive motor homes with living room areas and fancy entertainment centers. Towable trailers are the most popular, says Ashurst, but many renters prefer the small camper vans and so-called Class C campers, the over-the-cab style often seen on the highway.

Mike McNaughton of RZezy (only in Canada) recommends first-timers try a Class C model. "They're very easy to drive, about 24 to 28 feet long, and very spacious." Wittwer agrees, saying the 27-foot Class C RV she and her family rented "drove just like a moving truck, so it was very easy."

Stressing that RVs drive much like an SUV or van, Smalley says Cruise America doesn't need to offer driving lessons. However, at Outdoorsy, RV owners will take renters out for a test drive and will let them get behind the wheel if they wish to practice, says company founder Jen Young.

Given that most RVs are not difficult to drive, industry officials say a standard drivers' license suffices for renting all but the largest ones.

Need help deciding on the best rental option for you? Log onto the Go Rving website, where you can take a test that asks whether you want to take a bike and your laptop or a six-piece luggage set, and whether you like dining out or eating food on a stick. After you answer the questions, you're matched with the best RV for your travel style.

The coronavirus pandemic forced Kenneth and Michele Wittels of Tahoe City, California, to cancel a British Columbia ski trip they had planned for mid-March. Instead, they rented an RV with everything they needed and stayed closer to home. "We found a brand-new 2020, 21-foot RV with only 4,000 miles on it that met all of our requirements for our inaugural trip," including a shower and kitchen, and enough space for their dog so they wouldn't have to leave him behind and pay for a kennel.

Where to escape

When RVers hit the road as more states lift their shelter-in-place orders, they'll likely want to avoid crowds. "Practicing social distancing and enjoying Mother Nature is much easier in an RV than it is at a hotel. You can find a range of locations, from completely barren to more of a traditional campground with showers, playgrounds, and other amenities," says Young.

For their five-day escape, the Wittels explored California's remote Northern Coast, riding along the Eel River and driving the Redwood Highway south of Eureka. They stopped to listen to the waves and watch sunsets with wine in hand.

Go Rving's site lists other scenic byways suitable for social distancing, including the Selma to Montgomery March Byway, a 43-mile stretch in Alabama that follows Martin Luther King Jr.'s march in 1965, and routes through the Colorado Rockies and Michigan's Copper Country Trail. Also consider exploring the smaller, less-visited national parks. According to farandwide.com, California's Lassen Peak National Park only gets 500,000 visitors a year; Big Bend National Park in Texas, about 400,000; and Congaree National Park in South Carolina, just 160,000.

Young recommends several beach areas near Houston, including Galveston State Park and, for a little more quiet, Matagorda Bay and Surfside Beach. When Hawaii reopens again, and if you're comfortable with flying, she says Kauai and Maui are also great spots for RVers, with ample beachfront camping and parking.

What you'll pay

An RV trip can be affordable, but not necessarily cheaper than a hotel. "All in all, it's about the same amount of money to rent an RV as it would be to fly, rent a car, have a hotel and pay for meals. But you can't have the same experience in a hotel as you have in an RV. With an RV, you're right there, wherever that may be," says Wittwer.

Indeed, the rental costs can add up. Daily rates vary greatly, typically ranging from less than \$100 a day for a smaller vehicle to \$200 for a spacious motorhome. Additional fees can

include generator time, cleaning and mileage, which can be as high as 45 cents a mile. There's also insurance and, of course, gas and food. You can find free parking spots in many places, but some campgrounds charge \$20 to \$50 per night.

Even if you do spend as much as you would on a hotel getaway in a specific locale, an RV escape offers this advantage. "If you're in an RV and you don't feel like you're in the right place, you can just drive to the next spot," says Smalley.

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