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July 2020 Newsletter from Air Safe Hitches

# July 2020

Newsletter

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## People are Renting RVs in Droves

JUNE 3, 2020

by:

**RV PRO Staff**

Meet some happy campers.

Sales professional Bennett Prescott, 36, and his family usually spend summers adventuring far from their home in Wallingford, Conn. His job keeps him traveling more than half the year anyway, while his 38-year-old science-teacher wife, Selena Gell, gets time off. Last year, the couple, with toddler Jacob, made stops in Fire Island, N.Y.; Oregon; Italy; and Norway.

But as coronavirus risks loom for the third month and protests crop up across the country, a mobile retreat in rural America seems like the ideal escape. So, in May, Prescott and Gell booked a 32-foot-long RV through rent-from-owner listings site RVShare. On Saturday, they packed camping gear, cooking supplies, their bikes and pup Edison into their new house-on-wheels – a Class A 2015 THOR Motor Coach Ace 30.2 – and headed west.

“I’m a lot happier on this trip, where we have a lot of distractions and goals to look forward to and beautiful places to stay,” said Prescott, who is avoiding stops in major cities as riots ripple through them in response to George Floyd’s death last week at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer. The family, wearing masks and staying far from others to prevent virus transmission, has a flexible itinerary. “We’re going to plan as we go. It’s thrilling.”

Akin to protected bubbles, RVs allow for easy movement while maintaining social-distancing and quarantine-like conditions. Their allure during the pandemic and civil unrest is undeniable: RV rentals have increased 1,000 percent since April, while RV sales jumped 600 percent in the same time period, according to the RV Industry Association and Kampgrounds of America (KOA). More than 25 million Americans will go RVing this summer, estimates the association, which also found that 80 percent of recent buyers are first-time owners.

## The 10 Year Rule | Why RVers Hate It and RV Park Owners Use It

Have you heard of the “10 year rule” at RV parks? It’s a simple idea. If your RV is older than 10 years, you can be denied a reservation.

While many RVers have never experienced this rule first hand, it’s commonly used in RV hot spots like Florida and Arizona.

Today we’re talking to RVers & RV park owners about how the rule is implemented and why it’s used. We’ll even share some surprising data that shows more commonality between RVers

& park owners than you might expect.

Let's dive in!

Where's The 10 Year Rule Used and How Can I Find Out?

While Florida & Arizona use the 10 year rule more than other states, you can find it in use at RV parks from Maine to California.

Usually the RV park will mention it on their website. Other times it will be asked over the phone when you make a reservation. In rare cases, you won't find out until you arrive at an RV park and potentially get turned away even though you made a reservation.

Be proactive if you're concerned.

- Scan the RV park website for mention of it.
- Call the park and ask directly.
- Monitor Facebook groups for other RVers experiences

Do RV Parks Allow Exceptions To The Rule?

Yes! Almost every RV park that implements the 10 year rule also allows exceptions for it. In our experience (owning in vintage RVs for 5 years), we've never been turned away.

Most often RV parks will ask for a picture of your RV. They will either allow or deny based on the picture.

Keep in mind – you need to be honest with the picture you send. We've spoken with RV park managers who've turned away RVs on arrival because a misleading approval-picture.

Classic Travel Trailers Have The Upper Hand

There are many manufacturers who've kept their design similar for over 30 years. If you have a Scamp, Casita or Airstream – there's a good chance the RV park manager won't know a 1999 from a 2020 (if condition is good).

What Do RVers Think About the 10 Year Rule?

Without a doubt, **RVers absolutely hate** the 10 year rule! We polled **our online community**, with nearly 500 RVers surveyed, and found that **88% did not approve** of the rule.

The survey comments were insightful and very telling. RVers, like humans throughout time, despise being generalized by an arbitrary number.

Here's some of the RVer feedback:

- "I think it is pretty silly for most situations. Most older rigs we see aren't really eye sores or anything, they are just older so have a different design." – Shane M.
- " I don't have an issue with it since it's their right as private owners. I know some campgrounds that have a better option, they request a photo of your rig, this way the ones like the restored units and ones kept in good shape don't get refused." – Ken H.
- "It's usually high end expensive parks. We don't have a 10 yr old trailer but don't camp at those anyway." -Laurie M.
- "I don't like camping beside cousin Eddie's Rv, but I have no problem looking at a clean well kept RV no matter the age." Kevin V.

Why Do RV Park Owners Use the 10 Year Rule?

RV park owners use the 10 year rule as a safe guard. We've spoken with many owners and have discovered there's no good way of weeding out unkept RVs.

The 10 year rule is a baseline for RVs on the decline. It's not feasible for RV park managers to inspect every rig that arrives. Yet, they must safe guard their park and guests.

Unkept RVs are apt to leak, become an eye sore and cause potential hazards to the RV park community.

Here's what an RV park owner has to say about the 10 year rule:

*As an RV park owner we had to implement the 10 year rule on monthlies. Simply because if we don't then we get units that aren't street ready, black tank leaks, holes in the side-walls. And of course others in our area don't want to have a neighbor that looks like Fred Sanford.*

*What we do is require a picture of the unit and it must be registered to be on the road for monthlies.*

*If it's an overnight stay we are much easier on the rule.*

This seems to be the overall sentiment from most RV park owners that implement the rule.

Do RVers Think RV Park Owners Should Deny Based on Condition?

Yes, resoundingly! The large majority of RVers we surveyed think park owners have the right to deny based on RV condition. In fact, 82% of RVers agree on that.

### **So, why the discord between this thought and the 10 year rule?**

It seems most RVers think 10 years is a completely arbitrary number. With motorhomes costing upwards of \$250,000, it is unrealistic to buy a new coach every ten years.

RVs don't want to be punished for having an RV that is 10+ years old, especially if it's been well maintained or restored (vintage trailer).

This is what RVers have to say:

- "That's kind of the point of the 10 year rule. It's a \*nice\* way to say your RV is a piece of junk without having to be rude about it. Our rig was 20 years old and we were never turned away from parks that had the rule. The 10 year rule is essentially a condition rule." – Melinda C.
- "For us it's a question of free enterprise. So long as there's no sociological discrimination I'm on the side of the business owners rights. In some cases valuing community safety from poorly maintained equipment must be considered. But I do NOT think truly well maintained vintage or custom RV'S should be blocked." – James A.
- "I think they should be able to turn people away, but certainly going to lose a lot of business that way. Sort of like all the 55+ parks around the snowbird locations. Don't want my money? Fair enough." – Shane M.

Are There Other Demographics Banned at Certain RV Parks?

For sure! Here's a list of additional RV park "no camping" types:

- **Skoolies:** Buses are banned from many RV parks. This is usually because they aren't officially coded to be lived in.
- **Dog Breeds :** For insurance reasons, many RV parks limit the type of dog breeds that can stay on site.
- **Motorcoach Only Resorts:** Some RV resorts only allow Class A & Super C units.
- **Airstream Only:** Believe it or not, there's a handful of campgrounds that only allow Airstreams!
- **55+ RV Parks:** These parks can to allow a certain amount of "less than 55" guests in their park, but don't have to. Technomadia **wrote a great article** explaining this.

# TOP RV CAMPING DESTINATIONS FOR 2020

By Devin Herz

As RV enthusiasts, we're always up for exploring a new camp destination. We've gathered some of the top RV and Airstream camping destinations across the US and are excited to share them with you!

Here are the top RV camping destinations on our radar for 2020:

### **Northeast**

**Delaware Water Gap KOA – East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania**  
Situated in Pocono Mountain ski country, the Delaware Water Gap KOA puts you in a region filled with a variety of activities and places to explore. Just a few hours from Hershey and New York City, you can find something to entertain each member of the family! Not to mention, the Delaware Water Gap is exciting all in itself!

**Martha's Vineyard Family Campground – Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts**

Enjoy an RV camp on an island? Yes, please! Martha's Vineyard Family Campground is the only RV campground on Martha's Vineyard. Enjoy the quaint villages, scenic beaches and picturesque sunsets that only this island can offer.

### **Southeast**

**Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort RV Park – Lake Buena Vista, Florida**

If you're a Disney fan, then camping at Fort Wilderness Resort must be on your list! Enjoy all the comforts of your RV or Airstream while visiting the "happiest place on Earth!" Major perk—you can experience all the amenities the resort has to offer, including the pools!

**Tallulah Gorge State Park – Tallulah Falls, Georgia**

If you're looking for a wow factor, Tallulah Gorge State Park is the place to go! The 1,000-foot-deep gorge is a site that just might take your breath away. Hike the trails to take in incredible views of the river and waterfalls. The park is also home to other forests and mountains to explore as well.

### **Northwest**

**Mammoth Campground – Yellowstone National Park – Wyoming**

Mammoth is Yellowstone's only year-round campground! While surrounded by high sagebrush steppe, there is plentiful sunshine throughout the camp which is great for those you utilize solar power. With wildlife viewing and nearby fishing, hiking and hot springs, this campground is a must-visit when traveling the Northwest.

**Pacific Beach State Park – Moclips, Washington**

If you're more of a water lover, than Pacific Beach State Park is perfect for you! Situated on 2,300 feet of shoreline, you can take advantage of all the water has to offer! Enjoy the fresh air, soak up the sun or even make a fire on the beach.

### **Southwest**

**Hole in the Wall Campground – Mojave National Preserve – Cima, California**

If you enjoy peace and quiet, then the Hole in the Wall Campground is the place to be! Referred to as "the middle of nowhere," this camp is one of two at Mojave National Preserve. Enjoy all the great outdoors has to offer with ample hiking trails and backpacking opportunities.

**Devil's Garden Campground – Arches National Park – Moab, Utah**

Devil's Garden is the only campsite within the Arches National Park! Take in the striking rock formations from within camp or set out to explore the beauty of the Arches. This campsite is situated just so that you can take off hiking as soon as you exit your RV. Truly a one of a kind experience!

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# Camping during coronavirus: Is it safe?

Forrest Brown • Published 12th June 2020

This is usually the time of year that campers are out in full force -- from bare-bones backpackers to folks who roll RV-style -- all enjoying what nature and summer have to offer.

But 2020 is unlike any other year in our lifetimes. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, it seems like every travel-related decision is a calculus of risk -- be it going to a restaurant or buying a plane ticket.

And camping is no exception.

So how has the pandemic affected camping this year? And if you decide to take a camping trip now that things are opening back up, what do you need to know before you go?

Canceled camping trips this spring

In the early stages of the pandemic, less was known about the transmission of Covid-19. As a result, people canceled or postponed trips as the country entered full lockdown mode.

CNN Travel talked with three families -- two in Georgia and one in Virginia -- who love to camp but who all had to cancel their spring trips, either because facilities closed or because of their own concerns about the pandemic.

State and national parks across America closed or restricted activities this spring.

For instance, Yellowstone and Grand Canyon had to close temporarily and then offered only phased reopenings in May. And campgrounds at Yellowstone were still closed in mid-June.

Things are starting to open back up -- but in patchwork fashion, very much depending on the location.

Private places such as Kampgrounds of America had to close some spots and put limits on others, in compliance with local and state regulations. But most KOAs are open now.

With a few limited exceptions, state parks in Arizona are open, and that includes their campgrounds (even as the state is dealing with an influx of patients with Covid-19 at hospitals).

Georgia, one of the first states to reopen its economy, is allowing camping at its state parks. But visitors will find restrictions -- swimming pools and playgrounds will be closed all summer, for instance.

Michigan, which has opened up more cautiously, plans to allow camping at its state parks on June 22. California has started a very cautious, case-by-case reopening of camp sites at its state parks.

It's a similar situation in Europe. There is no uniformity as to where or whether camping sites will reopen.

According to ACSI, an organization that specializes in camping information for Europe, campsites in Belgium were set to open on June 8, while Ireland is holding off on opening campsites until July 20.

New Zealand, which acted early on the pandemic, is now almost Covid-19 free. For its citizens, that means full access to huts, campgrounds and toilets as restrictions are lifted. Even so, the government urges its people to remain vigilant -- stay home if you're sick and keep up with the hand washing.

#### **A lower risk activity**

The good news for campers around the world itching to get some fresh air and sleep under the stars: There is growing consensus that transmission risks are lower outdoors than inside.

Claudia Finkelstein, an associate professor of family medicine at Michigan State University, pointed out in a recent article featured on CNN: "The final word on outdoor recreation? Of course, go out and be active. It's important for your mental and physical health. But, choose wisely, be prepared and stay safe."

The news site MLive recently spoke with four public health specialists in Michigan who rated 36 activities by their estimated level of risk. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest risk level, camping came in at a relatively low 3. That was on par with golfing and getting groceries.

For comparison, they rated playing tennis at just a 1 and going to gyms and amusement parks at an 8.

#### **Day camping**

Debi Gouge, a small-business owner and art instructor in Wythe County, Virginia, has longtime love of camping.

"Nature and camping have always been a place where I reconnect and refresh myself. Being out there breathing the air, and enjoying the beauty of the trees and the wind blowing through them is what I love," she said. "Also, it inspires me to create and paint."

So the pandemic has hit Debi, husband Tim Gouge and their nine dogs hard. She's had to be particularly cautious about staying virus-free because of a lifelong kidney condition.

"I have been very stressed these last few months," Gouge said. "Loss of income, not working, the unknown, etc."

"Then my wonderful husband came up with the great idea to give me some peace -- day camping. We set up our camper at Claytor Lake, which is within 20 miles of us and spend the days camping, hiking ... cooking out -- the works!"

"And then we come home late in the evening to sleep since we cannot have a pet sitter right now, and next morning, back to the campground."

She said there were no worries about social distancing or wearing masks as there was almost no one in the campground.

"It has been wonderful."

Isolated private farms and social bubbles

Kip Hardy, her husband, Brian, and their two children ages 7 and 2 like to use their home in Decatur, Georgia, as a base to explore the Southeast.

But the pandemic led her to cancel an early May camping trip in yurts at a Georgia state park. "We booked with two other families. One couldn't bring their dog. The other family didn't feel quite ready to venture out. Still having to share bathrooms made the other family shy away."

Another concern was Brian was still recovering from a recent surgery. Add it all up, and the camping trip became unworkable.

But that setback hasn't stopped the enterprising Hardys.

The family camped by themselves the last weekend in May at a private farm near Collegedale, Tennessee, that she said was huge.

"There were other people there, but not within half a mile of us. I was comfortable with that level of isolation. We encountered other people and said hello, but kept on walking."

The farm had horses and baby goats that her kids could play with.

Since the late May trip, she said they have joined a "social bubble" with another family.

Hardy said having an arrangement with another family might guide them toward sometimes making decisions that are more conservative than they'd make just for themselves.

"You have to consider the other family."

Nevertheless, the two families -- a total of eight people -- have settled on a camping trip this weekend on a private farm outside of Asheville, North Carolina. Hardy likes the private farm as she has more confidence in social distancing in such a setting.

One of the last considerations for the Hardys on choosing a destination: "How far do we think we can drive without having to stop a lot with young kids? Three hours is about that."

### **Delayed gratification**

Tony Lankford, the senior minister at First Baptist Church of St. Simons Island, Georgia, had to cancel a "pretty epic" urban camping trip with his wife, Tiffany, 12-year-old daughter Kaley and 10-year-old son Carter.

"We have been planning ... to explore places our kids have never been -- Washington, D.C., New York City, Richmond and Williamsburg, Virginia," Lankford told CNN Travel.

"Considering most of those stops are more urban environments and so much is still unknown about what the summer brings for those areas in terms of Covid-19, we decided to cancel our trip."

He said they started camping as a family about eight years ago for fast getaways.

"We lived in downtown Atlanta and wanted an easy way to get out of the city, have our kids experience nature, and actually see the stars," Lankford said.

"We purchased a 1969 Serro Scotty [trailer] for cheap, and I fixed it up. Our go-to was Red Top Mountain or Stone Mountain Park. Since I do not have Sundays off, they made for quick, easy trips."

Lankford has since upgraded campers twice and now has a 26-foot camper with bunks "so everyone can have their own space and take longer trips."

And they still plan on camping -- just later in the year.

"Our next scheduled trip is our annual 'Campsgiving,' he said. "Each year a big group of my wife's family camp together the week of Thanksgiving. It is always a great time of hanging out, eating a lot and letting our children see [family]."

Safety tips if you decide to go

There are numerous sources with safety tips if you decide to go camping, whether it's on public or private sites.

The state parks system in Minnesota has an excellent, detailed online guide (PDF). And the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in Vermont, another state that's a favorite of the outdoors set, has important tips.

Some of the highlights from their detailed suggestions:

-- **Don't be spontaneous; make plans:** Place reservations and buy permits, firewood, ice and other things online or by phone before you get to the campsite.

-- **Come supplied with cleaning and personal hygiene agents:** Arrive with your own soap, surface disinfectants, hand sanitizer, paper towels and toilet paper. This is one area where you shouldn't skimp.

-- **Social distancing:** Set up your campsite -- including sleeping, campfire and eating areas -- to be as far as possible from nearby campsites that hold people from different households.

-- **Keep it in the family:** Only let those in your household or "social bubble" into your individual campsite or RV.

-- **Be respectful of the rules:** Follow all campground rules and instructions for your own safety and that of others. That might include wearing a face mask in public areas, heeding social distancing signs and leaving furniture such as chairs and picnic tables where you found them.

-- **Avoid contact sports:** For instance, outdoor basketball courts may be open to shoot hoops, but signs prohibiting contact games should be respected.

-- **Trails:** If a trail is marked closed, there's a good reason. Don't go on it.

## RV travel soars for summer trips as air travel stalls

Self-contained, sanitized spaces popular with nervous travelers

By Chris McGinnis, SFGATE

Updated 9:12 am PDT, Monday, June 1, 2020

Summer travel via recreational vehicle, or RV, could hit record levels this year. Hitting the road in a self-contained cocoon, which travelers can sanitize to their liking, is on a roll as gasoline prices tumble and Americans seek ways to express their pent up demand to get out of the house.

"RVs provide a great way for consumers to enjoy vacations with their families, while still adhering to social-distancing policies that are likely to remain in place in some fashion moving forward," said RV Industry Association President Craig Kirby.

San Francisco-based Outdoorsy.com, a company that connects renters with RV owners, has seen visits to its website hit 2.5 million this month, up 93% compared to the same time last year, according to a spokesperson. Its gross bookings are up 84% year-over-year. "We had our best bookings day on record this week — with 300 percent year-over-year growth that day," she said.

RV vacations produced some of the fondest summer vacation memories from my childhood, such as the time we booked an "Islander" motor home in Atlanta and rumbled up to Ontario to visit family for summer vacation. Best memory? We stopped in Pennsylvania's Amish country during peak fruit and vegetable season, bought berries and my mother made a pie in the RV's tiny oven while we watched locals clop around in their horses and buggies from our parking spot.

A few years later, we rented a 36-foot whopper of a Winnebago to drive to the Rockies for the grand tour from Denver, up through the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone parks and into Montana, then back across the high plains with a stop at Mount Rushmore. Most thrilling for me was that I was 15-years-old at the time and in possession of my learner's permit, and my father let me drive that big rig on those long flat freeways listening to Boz Scaggs and ELO 8-track tapes!

Care to create your own memories? Here's what you need to know to start planning your own

RV experience for your family or circle of friends.

First, get busy. Increased interest in RV travel this summer means higher prices and frequent sellouts.

How can you find the right RV? There are several companies that rent their own fleets of motor homes such as **Cruise America** and **El Monte RV**. There are also Airbnb-style websites set up that connect potential renters with RV owners, such as **RVShare.com**, **Outdoorsy.com** and **GoRVing.com**. Back in the day, my father saw the Islander parked in a driveway in our neighborhood — he approached the owner and they worked out a private deal to rent it, so there's a low-tech option, too.

To get an idea of cost, let's look at Cruise America's weekly rates for a "**standard**" size motor home that sleeps five. Cruise America's motor homes are midrange — functional but not fancy. Pets are allowed. For a one week rental, picking up and dropping off in the Bay Area, you'll pay about \$200 per night, or about \$1,400 for a week. There is also a fee of 35 cents per mile, so if you plan on driving 1,000 miles, you'll pay \$350. And you'll also pay a \$3.50 fee per hour for use of the generator, typically used to power air conditioning. Kitchen and bedding "kits" are extra.

Then there is gasoline, which is relatively cheap right now (averaging about \$2.60 per gallon in California). A standard size RV gets about 10 mpg. So, the all-in price for a seven-day RV motor home rental will be about \$2,000 plus gas, campground, parking or park fees, and food/beverages. That's the price for a **Class C-style** motor home.

The larger "**bus**" style homes (Class A) are more expensive, and offer more room and amenities — I even found one with a **fireplace!** Keep in mind that you'll likely have to park the big rigs overnight in designated campgrounds, with electrical and waste hookups.

Camper vans, such as the popular **Sprinter models** (Class B), vary in price, and are prized because they can be legally parked in most parking lots. These smaller, spryer vans are best for those who want to go "boondocking," where you drive to remote areas, park and camp relying on the vehicle's generator and waste systems.

While I've been writing about driveable motor homes, there are a wide variety of recreational vehicles available, including non-driveable RVs that you tow behind a car, ranging from small teardrop trailers to smooth and silvery vintage Airstreams.

Some other considerations for those ready to hit the road in an RV this summer:

- –You can keep your RV cocoon as sanitized as you like, but keep in mind that gasoline stations, truck stops and restaurants along the road could harbor the coronavirus, so pack latex gloves or paper towels for touching gas pumps, and only allow one person out of the RV.
- –Keep in mind that some state park campgrounds are closed, but many are opening now. Campgrounds are also places where you'll likely come into contact with others. Most private campgrounds, such as **those operated by KOA**, are still open. In any case, be sure to call ahead to determine availability — you don't want to get stuck driving around in the dark looking for a place to park overnight.
- –With many hotels in the United States still closed, you'll have fewer options for alternate lodging if, like our family experienced back in the day, there is too much togetherness and the need for a long hot shower!

## My Husband Surprised Me By Renting An RV For Our Family

Becca Cooper Leebove

June 18, 2020,

My husband texted me while we were both working from home in our designated pop-up

offices, while admittedly our kids likely were watching TV. He said, “honey, we’re going on an RV trip.” I pretty much ignored him.

As we all can relate, life has been such a blur between finishing homeschool, working remotely and taking on way too many quarantine home repair projects. I continued to work and assumed this “so-called RV trip” as something that might never happen.

Let me begin by saying that we’re not a camping family. While we hike, ski, bike and enjoy the outdoors, we’ve been camping pretty much once, with my son’s Boy Scout den.

That said, I did not argue with his idea and decided to take the spontaneous opportunity as a blessing. Our kids (a three-year-old girl and eight-year-old boy) were also very excited. They came into my home office to tell me that their dad had rented an RV. My right eyebrow rose. My kids had not been that excited in a long time — even pre-pandemic.

And then my husband informed me he had actually rented an RV for the upcoming weekend (this past Memorial Day). I was shocked that he followed through.

One thing is for sure: I kept an open mind. Here’s why I don’t regret packing up and leaving with no planning during a pandemic.

### **Concept of Home**

The kids were *beyond* mesmerized by the concept of a mobile-home, so much so that our neighbors (people that we spent the entire quarantine with) were obsessed as well. The concept of “home on wheels” was intriguing and safe. It was on the edge, but still offered stability. The RV had all the amenities of home, so we could cook, snack, sleep, use the restroom and rest in comfort and safety.

### **Exploring with Flexibility**

We did not have to stick to our plans. We diverted our trip on the first day after learning that RV parks are pretty crowded. We set off for a day trip to Buena Vista, Colorado (we live south of Denver). We went sight-seeing, explored, and made our own adventure with the convenience of a safe landing spot and no concerns of finding a place to sleep.

### **No TV and Electronics**

While TV and the internet were accessible, our kids were way more intrigued with the nature outside such as dirt, hills, trees, lakes, the view from the ride and everything else novel in between. There was a blow-up for a movie and the Internet was not working. We gave them flashlights to play with and they were quickly distracted.

### **It Was Economical**

While it did take some money to make it happen, the cost was pretty straightforward. We drove a total of 560 miles, used two tanks of gas at \$80 each (one tank to return) and rented the RV for about \$100 per night. We spent about \$60 per night on campsites and RV parks. We spent money on groceries and used everything else that we had at home already.

### **My Kids Gained a New Appreciation**

My kids really appreciated it, did not fight, did not yell, and actually helped out in ways that I’ve never seen before. They enjoyed cooking us dinner and breakfast — my son (8) volunteered to make eggs for breakfast on a propane grill and hot dogs and burgers over the fire for dinner. He also swept up the RV several times. My daughter (3) learned to use the potty better than before the trip. We roasted marshmallows, enjoyed a campfire and it was pretty amazing. It was not behavior we’ve seen from our kids on *any* other vacation. We usually question why we brought our kids on vacation because they act pretty ungrateful at times — sorry to be so honest here, but it is a valid concern.

### **We Could Bring Our Own “Toys”**

Bikes, skateboards, fishing poles, you name it: This was the ultimate game changer for our family. We were able to pack our “toys” in a nifty little compartment in the RV basement. We fit it *all* in, including helmets, balls and games. The family had SO much to do and the kids absolutely loved having access to their bikes 24/7. It was brilliant and the best part of the trip to say the least. There is nothing like avoiding rental companies — not that those are an option now anyway.

Plus, we packed pretty minimally. We did not need much, but essential food and snacks, blankets, a first aid kit, a few pots and pans, paperware, utensils, beer/wine/coffee and basic cleaning supplies.

I don't think we would have ever tried this pre-pandemic. But all in all, the trip was *worth it*. My kids came back with a true and new appreciation for things and have been talking about this trip ever since. And the best part is that we have some happy memories and a new tradition.

## The Dreams and Realities of an RV in Retirement

**Thoughts from owners, experts and would-be buyers of recreational vehicles** by Aaron Kassraie, **AARP**, January 24, 2020

Many retirees quip that they often find themselves busier in retirement than ever before. One way some retirees (and near-retirees) are staying busy is hitting the road in recreational vehicles.

About 10 million U.S. households own RVs, and the majority of those owners have traditionally been over 50, according to the RV Industry Association (RVIA).

Ownership rates by age group cited by RVIA are highest among Americans ages:

- 45-54 (11.4 percent)
- 55-64 (11.1 percent)
- 35-44 (11.0 percent)
- 65-74 (8.8 percent)
- 75-plus (5.5 percent)
- 18-34 (4.9 percent)

Sales of RVs have grown steadily since the Great Recession, hitting an all-time high in 2017.

If you are getting close to retirement — or already there and looking for new ways to spend your retirement — here are some considerations from others in the RV world about purchasing a house on wheels.

### The RV lifestyle

"RVers are friendly people. When you go to a campground, if you don't know people, you will," says Jeremy Puglisi, an author of books about RVing and cohost of the *RV Travel Atlas* podcast. "Everyone introduces themselves. Everybody's friendly."

In response to the increase in RVers, the number of campgrounds around the country is growing from today's 18,000. RVers' expectations are also growing.

"The RV industry is pushing to continue to expand, improve and upgrade campgrounds in national parks and on federal lands," says Kevin Broom, director of media relations for RVIA. "A lot of those campgrounds were constructed in the 1950s and '60s and haven't really kept pace with the modern RVs." Dump stations, often found at campgrounds, are essential for RV owners, who need to empty waste holding tanks.

Parking is another ever-present challenge for RV owners, especially when campgrounds are few, full or far between. But it's part of the lifestyle. Some truck stops, big-box retailers, churches, hotels, movie theaters, casinos, rest stops and other roadside locations will allow overnight parking. To be sure, check with the specific location so you won't get a ticket or a surprise knock on your door. Websites including RV Camping and Free Campsites can help find places to camp and park.

### Freedom of the road

David Schaum, 53, of Reston, Virginia, is a new empty nester, and as he and his wife approach retirement, they want to find new activities together.

"We both enjoy the outdoors. We both have really started working out, getting back into shape and hiking. So the places where we go hiking in the mountains has brought about an interest in possibly having a camper that allows us to stay out in the mountains for a few days," Schaum says. "The funny thing is, I'm in the hotel business, so I can get a hotel wherever I go for free."

For many, the most attractive part about owning an RV is being able to travel where you want,

when you want. Kathy Dolan, 67, a longtime RVer from Haymarket, Virginia, says she and her husband "like to go to the campgrounds, go gallivanting in the towns and meeting people. Then we take it to another place."

Naturally, an RV makes the nomadic life easier, since you already have your stuff with you, perhaps even your pets.

"You have more mobility," says James Mercer, 60, of The Plains, Virginia, "and if you want to go somewhere, everything you need is packed right into that vehicle. All you need to do is buy food, and just get in and go fill up with gas." Mercer and his wife, Raejean, 57, are retired and looking into possibly buying an RV.

"Most people have the dream to see the country and all the things they couldn't while they were busy with their working lives," says Tom Dewalt, a sales consultant for Airstream, a manufacturer of travel trailers. "We represent the opportunity to explore the country, see everything: art, all the heritage and historical sites, all the natural wonders of the United States. And there's plenty of them."

### Realities behind the dream

Mike Miles, 70, a Maryland resident, says he and his wife would like to buy an RV to drive cross country and visit their kids. He's hesitant about making a purchase because "there's a lot of stuff on the internet saying things break easily, you can't get it fixed."

Dolan, the veteran RVer, can't dispel that fear. "When you have a motor home, you spend a lot of time in the repair shop," she admits. "Get used to that."

At the same time, don't let mechanical concerns and the seeming complexities of an RV be a deterrent from the lifestyle if it is something you'd really like to take on, says Puglisi, the RV author and podcaster.

"Don't be afraid to ask for help at a campground," he says. "Campers are friendly people. A lot of RV owners are handy people."

As for the expense, though the initial purchase price and ongoing maintenance certainly add up, it's also important to calculate the potential savings on travel and vacations that can come with an RV over time.

"You don't have to pay for airfare. Campgrounds average in price at \$40 a night," says RVIA's Broom. "You don't have to eat in restaurants three meals a day. You can eat out when you want, but you can also prepare your own foods."

A study by CBRE Hotels Advisory Group, commissioned by RVIA, estimated that a couple vacationing in an RV could save between 8 percent and 53 percent, depending on the type of RV. The study weighed the costs of traditional travel such as airline tickets, hotel rooms and meals out, versus the unique costs of RV travel, such as fuel. Pop-up camper trailers offered the most savings, while large Class A and Class C motor homes offered the least.

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