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Newsletter

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RVing for the first time? 8 tips for newbies I wish I'd known during my first trip

A month ago, if I had heard the words “black water” in conversation, I'd have assumed the speaker was discussing an obscure movie, perhaps an Australian film (there are two by that name) or a Jean-Claude Van Damme flick that I haven't seen.

But after two weeks of driving across the country, the words “black water” immediately conjure images of RVs, wastewater tanks and, well, poo spilling out onto my feet (which we'll get to later).

I know now that the first definition of black water is solid and liquid waste that must be dumped from an RV's holding tanks, because I am now an RVer.

To be more precise, I'm someone who has laughed, cried, sung very loudly, been car sick quietly (when I was sitting in the back, which is a much rockier ride), seen pink sunrises, viewed orange mountains, passed by hundreds of bison, made countless PB&Js and listened to hours of podcasts while riding along in a 25-foot RV across the country a few weeks ago with my boyfriend.

I'm one of the many people who decided to take a summer road trip – complete with a vehicle that has a toilet and fridge – after the global pandemic made other travel plans unsafe and/or impossible.

How much coronavirus risk is there in common travel activities? We asked an expert After spending nearly 4,000 miles on the road in an RV, I know a lot more than I did a month ago. A lot that I, frankly, wish I'd known before leaving California to head to New Jersey.

But I'll give you, dear reader, the benefit of my two weeks of experience inside of my temporary motorhome.

Here are eight tips that I wish I had known before embarking on my first RV road trip.

1. Don't get poop on yourself If there's a toilet in your rig, you're going to need to dump the waste – the aforementioned black water – at some point. When you go to open the storage compartment on the side of the vehicle to remove the cap and connect the sewer hose in order to dump, remember this: Make sure the dump valves are closed!

You may not know exactly what I'm talking about now, but please trust me on this. Watch videos about dumping the holding tanks. Read the page in your motorhome manual about the tanks. Make sure you close those latches! Otherwise, you might gag while

your sneakers become “poop shoes” you can never wear again.

2. Remember your toolkit It’s hard to anticipate something like having your sideview mirror get so loose that it no longer provides any help with attempting lane changes. But these things happen, and you should prepare for them, instead of relying on your copilot to turn or finding a man on the road who has a wrench you can borrow to tighten said mirror.

Bring a toolkit. Bring allen or hex wrenches. Bring duct tape. Bring scissors. Bring rubber bands and zip ties. Bring plenty of towels that you can use as noise buffers (if your rig is as rickety as our Ford F-350-based ride from Cruise America was) by wrapping them around various doors and drawers and windows. Be ready to fix the unanticipated.

3. Pack sufficient cookware If your rented RV has a stove and comes with kitchen tools, you should check that it also has pans, cutting boards and silverware. And if it has knives, make sure they’re sharp enough to cut effectively.

Ours did not. We only learned when we returned our RV that if we had replaced the missing or faulty cookware with items we bought, then Cruise America would’ve reimbursed us for the new items (though we did not read about this online). This may not be the case elsewhere, but it’s wise to take complete inventory of your cookware regardless, and make sure you pack thermoses.

4. Use leveling blocks Like Legos? You’ll love stackable leveling blocks that you can place under your vehicle’s wheels in order to level out your parking spot. Buy a set (Home Depot, Amazon and plenty of other sellers offer blocks) before you embark on your trip.

If a level (which should be in that toolbox you brought) determines that your RV is not flat, determine which wheel(s) need a lift.

When it was too dark or we were too tired to use leveling blocks, we faced consequences: Our fridge stopped running (because it relies on gravity to cool properly and only works when the vehicle is level) and I felt like I was floating, unevenly, at sea.

That brings me to my next tip.

5. Get into your campground before dark Map out your trip so that you get to your overnight parking spot before dark. Whether you’re driving into a campground, an RV park or – especially – a place in the woods where you’ll be boondocking (RV-speak for spending the night somewhere for free, without electric or water hookups), it’s important to be able to see your surroundings.

It’s very challenging to see camping spot numbers and even harder to determine whether you’ve parked safely (and level) in the dark. Also: You don’t want to wake up and be unable to recognize your surroundings. Waking up in a new place each morning is jarring enough as it is!

6. Download camping apps If not for two particular apps, there would have been many nights that we wouldn’t have found a place to sleep. May I recommend Campendium and Harvest Hosts?

Campendium is like a Yelp for RVers that provides honest reviews and detailed information on middle-of-nowhere spots to boondock or pay to camp. We have this app to thank for our most memorable parking spot, on a plateau in the Badlands of South Dakota.

Harvest Hosts is a program that, after one annual fee of \$79, connects you with a number of unique places to stay overnight for free. You may not have anticipated a stop at an Ohio vineyard or a Pennsylvania brewery when you were initially mapping out your road trip, but you likely won’t regret staying – and getting drinks once you arrive.

7. Use RV toilet essentials Sorry to bring up the bathroom again, but it’s important. Without it, traveling during a pandemic would be a lot more dangerous.

And if you don’t pack certain RV bathroom essentials, you’ll find yourself up a certain river without a paddle.

Dissolvable toilet paper and scented toilet capsules (that you should drop in your tank, after you flush plenty of water, at the start of your excursion) are important for preventing buildup and odors. These can be found at stores including Walmart.

Even if you use those things properly, you might end up with a clog in your toilet. For that, one of the many remedies you can find online involves pouring boiling water down the toilet. That's the only one I can endorse, because it seemed to be the thing that worked for us.

8. Wake up early, watch the sunrise, take a nap Driving your bathroom and kitchen around with you makes life super convenient. You can eat, nap and relieve yourself whenever you'd like!

With that in mind, here's how I recommend structuring days when you visit national parks: Wake up by 5 a.m. Make coffee. Drive inside the park to a place with a gorgeous view. Enjoy the sunrise and wildlife with few other humans around. Go to sleep. Wake up already in the place that other people are waiting in line for. Go on a hike.

When you return to your camping spot, take a moment to appreciate the RV lifestyle. Bask in the nature around you before retiring to your big sleeping box. Promise yourself you'll go on another road trip soon.

House Passes GAOA; Headed Next to President's Desk

The Great American Outdoors Act is considered one of the most important pieces of legislation pertaining to the outdoor recreation industry in decades. Dozens of organizations pushed hard to get this passed by Congress, and President Trump has already stated publicly that he will sign it into law.

The RV Industry Association has been in the middle of the fight for the past few years , and here is its statement on the Act's passage.

The U.S. House of Representatives took significant action to address campground modernization and deferred maintenance on public lands with the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) by a vote of 310-107. The bill, which will provide the largest investment in our iconic public lands in over a century, was overwhelmingly approved by the Senate last month.

GAOA will invest up to \$9.5 billion of non-taxpayer funds to address the infrastructure within the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and other federal agencies. The bill will also fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and provide \$900 million per year in investment in the public lands, parks, and trails that are the backbone of the outdoor recreation economy.

"If you're an RVer, or any kind of outdoor recreation enthusiast, the Great American Outdoors Act is the best thing to happen to our community in six decades," said Craig Kirby, RV Industry Association president. "Thank you to those members of Congress who voted in favor of this landmark legislation that will direct significant funds toward critical deferred maintenance and campground modernization needs on our public lands and waters. Twenty million RVers across the country depend on our iconic state and federal lands for recreation, conservation, enjoyment, and overnight camping. Enactment of this milestone legislation will mean increased recreation access for all no matter where they live, allowing more Americans to find fulfillment in living an active outdoor lifestyle."

The bipartisan legislation, which had overwhelming support from the House and Senate RV caucuses, will achieve the dual goals of protecting America's special places and repairing deteriorating infrastructure. Funds provided in the GAOA will help improve outdoor recreation-related facilities that RVers rely on, like campgrounds, roads, bridges, parking lots, restrooms, visitor centers, trails, docks, and more – which have desperately needed updating or repairs for decades. It will help achieve this goal while preserving water quantity and quality, sustaining working landscapes and rural economies.

"RVers across the country depend on our incredible state and federal lands for recreation, conservation, enjoyment, and overnight camping. Thanks to the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act by the House of Representatives, we are one step closer to improving the experience of RVers by addressing deferred maintenance and campground modernization needs across federal lands and waters," said Bob Martin, president and CEO of THOR

Industries. “This legislation is critical not only to the RV industry and the significant number of new consumers looking to RVs as a way to travel this summer, but also to the wider outdoor recreation economy. We are grateful for the bipartisan support of this bill received in both the House and the Senate and look forward to the president signing the bill.”

The LWCF has, for 50 years, been our nation’s most successful conservation program. LWCF funds can be a lifeline for communities that rely on recreation access to local, state, and national parks, wildlife habitats, and working forests. LWCF funds have had a direct impact on growing the outdoor recreation economy by increasing recreational access to public lands in every state and county in America. Just recently, the impact of LWCF has been seen on local campgrounds with the announcement of a \$200,000 LWCF grant to upgrade electrical hookups, fire pits, and restrooms at an RV campground in Georgia. Passage of the GAOA will fund similar grants to modernize campgrounds across the country.

“The Great American Outdoors Act will ensure safe and enjoyable experiences for the millions of RVers across the country by increasing recreation access for all Americans no matter where they live, and addressing the deferred maintenance backlog on public lands and waters,” said Mike Happe, Winnebago Industries president and CEO. “This milestone legislation is important not only for the RV industry but also for the greater \$778 billion outdoor recreation economy.”

A study from the National Park Service estimates that addressing the backlog in our national parks alone would create or support over 100,000 infrastructure-related jobs, most of these in struggling rural communities – the communities that have been hit particularly hard in the wake of the pandemic. Additionally, the study shows GAOA’s impact on NPS sites alone would support \$6.5 billion in labor income, \$17.5 billion in economic output, and contribute \$9.6 billion to the US GDP. As visitors return to our parks and public lands, funding created by the GAOA will ensure that these special places are safe, accessible, and ready to help generate tourist dollars in local communities and tax revenues for local, state, and federal agencies.

“The all-American RV industry has been solidly behind the Great American Outdoors Act from the start,” said Chris Bornemann, RV Industry Association director of government affairs. “Thank you, Congress, and the RV caucus, for providing the resources to reinvigorate our iconic lands and make them safe and modern for all outdoor recreation lovers. We look forward to the president signing the bill, something he has already promised to do.”

June Shipment Numbers Highest in Almost Two Years

RV PRO Staff July 27, 2020

RV wholesale shipments tracked by the RV Industry Association posted their best month in 2020 and the highest monthly total since October 2018 as deliveries to retailers reached 40,462 units in June, a 10.8 percent rise over the June 2019 total of 36,525 units.

Towable RVs, led by conventional travel trailers, totaled 37,439 units for the month, a gain of 12.9 percent of compared to last June’s total of 33,171 shipments. Motorhomes finished the month with 3,023 units, down 9.8 percent compared to the June 2019 total of 3,353 units. Reflective of younger, first-time buyers interested in RVing and the continued rise in the #Vanlife phenomenon, Folding Camping Trailers and Type B RVs in the motorhome market continue to see strong gains

For the year, RV wholesale shipments total 176,067 units, down 18.7 percent from 216,581 units at the mid-year point in 2019. Towable RVs stand at 159,059 units, down 16.8 percent while motorhomes have dropped 33.3 percent, to 17,008 units.

Park Model RVs ended the month down 20.3 percent compared to last June with 310 shipments.

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Pandemic Pushes Travelers to Take to the Road in RVs

During the economic recovery that followed the financial crisis of 2008, sales of recreational vehicles like motor homes boomed for several years.

The coronavirus pandemic appears to be sparking another boom in the industry as travelers concerned about the risks of flying are packing their families into RVs and seeking out campgrounds around the country.

Dealers and RV manufacturers, such as Thor Industries, Winnebago and Forest River, have reported spikes in demand during the spring and summer of 2020, and industry analysts say several good months could be ahead.

A lot of these buyers are first-timers, and many are purchasing lower-cost units, which are often favored by younger consumers.

"All dealers are reporting a high mix of first-time buyers as evident by lack of trade-in units," said Wells Fargo analyst Tim Conder in a July 15 note. "Dealers are saying as high as 80 percent of customers are first-time buyers ... vs. the typical 25 percent mix. The pandemic is driving the purchase decision for new-entrants."

From Camping To Dining Out: Here's How Experts Rate The Risks Of 14 Summer Activities

It has been months of quarantine for many of us. The urge to get out and enjoy the summer is real. But given that coronavirus cases continue to surge in many places, what's safe? We asked a panel of infectious disease and public health experts to rate the risk of summer activities, from backyard gatherings to a day at the pool to sharing a vacation house with another household.

One big warning: Your personal risk depends on your age and health, the prevalence of the virus in your area and the precautions you take during any of these activities. Also, many areas continue to restrict the activities described here, so check your local laws.

And there's no such thing as a zero-risk outing right now. As states begin allowing businesses and public areas to reopen, decisions about what's safe will be up to individuals. It can help to think through the risks the way the experts do.

"We can think of transmission risk with a simple phrase: time, space, people, place," explains Dr. William Miller, an epidemiologist at Ohio State University.

Here's his rule of thumb: The more *time* you spend and the closer in *space* you are to any infected people, the higher your risk. Interacting with more *people* raises your risk, and indoor *places* are riskier than outdoors.

Dr. Emily Landon, a hospital epidemiologist and infectious diseases specialist at University of Chicago Medicine, has her own shorthand: "Always choose outdoors over indoor, always choose masking over not masking and always choose more space for fewer people over a smaller space."

Our experts shared their thoughts via phone and email interviews.

Jump to an activity: backyard gathering; restaurant; worship service; beach or pool; outdoor party; public restroom; a friend using your bathroom; vacationing with another family; hotel; haircut; shopping mall; nightclub; camping; outdoor sports

1. A BYOB backyard gathering with one other household: low to medium risk

Meeting in a spacious outdoor area with only a small group isn't too risky. But our experts say that safety here depends on whom you invite and what their behaviors have been. "If you have a gathering with one other household that [has] followed social distancing, this would be a low-risk activity," says Dr. Judith Guzman-Cottrill, a pediatric infectious disease expert at Oregon Health & Science University.

What alters risk? To lower risk, avoid sharing food, drinks or utensils — make it a BYO-everything party. Dr. Andrew Janowski, a pediatric infectious diseases expert at Washington University in St. Louis, notes that the food itself isn't the risk but touching shared dishes or utensils could be.

Watch out for drinking, says Dr. Abraar Karan, a physician and public health researcher at Harvard Medical School, as it can make people sloppy about social distancing. It also increases the odds that people will want to use your bathroom. "Once you move into the house with others, the risk profile goes up," he says.

Some experts suggest wearing a face covering, but Landon points out that you can't realistically stay masked while eating and drinking. She suggests an alternative to a meal would be a backyard lawn tournament: That way, "the kids can play together but still with their masks on." It could be fun for the grown-ups too.

2. Eating indoors at a restaurant: medium to high risk

Indoor dining "is still amongst the riskier things you can do," Landon warns. The trouble is, says Miller, "people tend to linger in restaurants. So even if spacing is OK, the duration of exposure is longer." Also, he says, talking "appears to lead to some release of the virus."

Karan notes that one outbreak in Guangzhou, China, took place in a restaurant with no windows and poor ventilation, and the air conditioning appears to have blown droplets between tables.

What alters risk? Janowski says the risk level depends on how well the restaurant has adapted for the pandemic. Eateries should reduce and space out seating, require servers to wear masks and offer easy access to hand-washing stations.

They should also provide single-use options for condiments so you don't have to touch shared

ones, says Janowski. And they should close all self-serve areas like soda fountains or buffet tables.

If you do go to a restaurant, look for outdoor seating. Landon says she would go with only members of her household, because "I don't want to have to take my mask off in the close proximity of a bunch of other people."

3. Attending a religious service indoors: high risk

Worship services involve people from different households coming together indoors for an extended time. "All of the ingredients are there for the potential for a lot of people becoming infected in the short amount of time," says Kimberly Powers, an epidemiologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She points to outbreaks linked to churches: In one, 35 out of 92 people who attended a service at a rural Arkansas church developed COVID-19.

Singing — whether from the pews or the choir — is high risk, several experts noted, citing a study of a choir practice in Washington state where over half of attendees became infected.

What alters risk: If people are appropriately socially distanced, wear masks and avoid singing, it may reduce the risk, Karan says. Also, avoid any shared worship items like hymnals, Janowski adds.

Risk goes down if places of worship adapt, Guzman-Cottrill **said in May**. "My parish began having in-person services last week," she says. The church had advance sign-ups to limit attendance to 25 people. Attendees were required to be healthy, wear face coverings and sit at least 6 feet apart.

4. Spending the day at a popular beach or pool: low to medium risk

As long as you can stay socially distanced, this could be a pretty safe activity, our experts say. The problem is that many beaches have been getting crowded quickly, leading many counties and states to close their beaches periodically, as coronavirus cases sharply rise. So pay attention to conditions and restrictions in your area.

The water itself is not a risk. "The sheer volume of water will dilute out the virus, making the water a highly unlikely source of infection," says Janowski.

What alters risk? The key question is, how close are you to others? "Can you ensure that you can stay 6 feet [or more] from anyone outside of your designated family?" asks Rebecca Katz, director of the Center for Global Health Science and Security at Georgetown University Medical Center.

Watch out for crowds at entry points and bathrooms. Maintain social distance both on land and in the water.

Landon says her biggest worry about pools and beaches is kids. At pools, "they make friends with everyone," she says. "If you want to be able to see grandma for Sunday lunch, because that's what's really important to your family, then you don't want your kids running around with other people's kids."

She says a beach is better than a pool in terms of space. Follow the public health guidelines in your area. If they say it's OK to go to the beach, go early in the morning or late afternoon, when crowds are lower, and look for beaches that mark off spots for people to set up their areas.

5. An outdoor celebration such as a wedding with more than 10 guests: medium to high risk

Family-oriented celebrations are usually a summer tradition, but they come with a lot of risk right now. Many weddings have been postponed, with good reason.

"Outdoors reduces the risk, but as people are celebrating and drinking, it seems like they may not social distance as readily," says Karan, the Harvard physician. "These types of events end up being large crowds where people are having extended face-to-face conversations."

The larger the guest list, the greater the potential that one of them is infected, says Powers, the UNC epidemiologist.

What alters risk? The danger varies greatly depending on the size of the gathering and how closely people gather.

If you are considering hosting a celebration, make it a small one with mostly local guests. "Bringing in people from other communities" is high risk, says Landon, of the University of Chicago. "If people have to travel by car, by plane, from other places, you're really asking for it."

And really think twice about inviting your relatives, particularly older family members or those with underlying conditions. People may feel pressure to attend, even though it's hazardous to their health — and even more so if you emphasize that you're going to try to make it safe, says Landon. One of the largest clusters of deaths from the virus in Chicago occurred after a funeral in which one of the attendees spread it to many of his family members.

6. Using a public restroom: low to medium risk

Restrooms have been designed to prevent disease transmission, says Landon: "There are all sorts of things that you can catch from other people's poop, and you almost never do, because they're set up with all hard surfaces that can be cleaned."

The risk depends on the number of local COVID-19 cases and how clean the bathroom is, says Janowski of Washington University, noting that a bathroom involves multiple high-touch surfaces.

There isn't yet sufficient data to know if there's risk from toilet flushes aerosolizing the virus. Landon says that other viruses, such as norovirus, can be aerosolized by flushing, but norovirus doesn't often spread that way as long as bathrooms are cleaned. The CDC says it's "unclear whether the virus found in feces may be capable of causing COVID-19."

What alters risk: Miller says the main risk comes from restrooms that are small, busy and poorly ventilated — like "those restrooms in a gas station off the highway where the restroom is outside."

Choose a bathroom that looks clean and is well stocked with supplies such as paper towels, soap and toilet paper. Avoid bunching up in a line to use the toilet or staying there long, if you're within 6 feet of others. Wash your hands after you go, and use hand sanitizer on them if you need to touch any surfaces after that.

7. Letting a friend use your bathroom: low risk

Landon doesn't think it's a big risk: "What happens in the bathroom is going to be sucked out of the bathroom ventilation, and you can clean all the hard surfaces really easily."

Miller agrees: "You can run the fan, leave the door open after (so air flows) and clean the bathroom later. And if you use the bathroom after they do, just wash your hands."

What alters risk? It's possible that your friend is infected but asymptomatic, says Janowski. "It would be reasonable to decontaminate the bathroom after a friend uses it, including cleaning the high-touch surfaces of the door, toilet and sink."

8. Going to a vacation house with another family: low risk

Experts said that if both families have been quarantining and limiting their exposure to others, this is pretty safe. "If one family is very active or parents have higher-exposure jobs, then the risk increases," Miller says.

Landon thinks this arrangement could be a good idea, especially if the house is "in the woods where you're not going to have a lot of contact with other people," she says.

What alters risk? Landon suggests talking with the other family beforehand to make sure you share the same expectations for the precautions everyone will take in the two weeks before arrival and while you're there. Ensure that no one has signs of illness — if they do, they need to stay home. Miller recommends cleaning the major surfaces in the house on arrival. "And the more that people can reduce exposure in the days leading up to the trip, the better," he adds. Also, check out the current infection level in the area you're heading to — if it's high, it may be best to postpone.

9. Staying at a hotel: low to medium risk

The consensus is that staying at a hotel is relatively low risk, especially once you're in your room. It's best to limit your time in common areas such as the lobby, gym, restaurant and

elevator, where the risk of exposure is higher.

What alters risk? Bring disinfecting wipes to wipe down the TV remote control and other common surfaces. You might also want to remove the bedspread since it may not be cleaned after every guest, suggests Miller. Ask about the hotel's cleaning policies, as many have new COVID-19 protocols. "Beware of the elevators! Use the knuckle of your little or ring finger to press the buttons," says Miller.

Other suggestions: Order room service rather than eating at the restaurant, avoid the exercise room and wear a face covering in public spaces.

10. Getting a haircut: medium to high risk

A haircut involves "close contact and breathing that is extended for several minutes," Karan notes. "This is the primary mode of transmission that we know happens. And cloth masks certainly are not perfect for this."

Janowski says this is one of the highest-risk scenarios on this list, because there's no way to keep 6 feet from someone cutting your hair. "All it takes is [having] one asymptomatic but infected worker, and suddenly many customers are at high risk of infection," he says.

What alters risk? Landon believes the risk is not terribly high if both you and your haircutter wear masks and if COVID-19 is not very prevalent in your area. Look for a salon or barbershop that has (and enforces) policies to protect its employees, like wearing protective gear and sanitizing hands, she says: "By protecting their employees, they're protecting you too."

And make sure that your barber or stylist is all business, says Karan: "Stopping to chat at close distance like this is something we all love doing with our barbers normally. This is not the time for it."

11. Going shopping at a mall: risk varies

How risky this is depends on what kind of mall it is, how crowded it is and how much time you spend there, our panel agreed. "Crowds with high density lead to substantial increase in risk," says Miller. "The major mitigating factor is that people don't mingle in a single place for long."

What alters risk? Outdoor malls are preferable to indoor ones. And empty malls are better than crowded ones. Avoid the food court and go with purpose, not leisure, says Landon: "As much as you may like retail therapy, you should browse online before you go. Know what you're going to pick up or try on. Wear your mask. Go in, look at it. Make your decision and get out."

Be alert while you're there to avoid close contact. "Maintain your space," says Miller. "Try to go at off-peak hours." Bring hand sanitizer, says Guzman-Cottrill, and use it frequently, especially if you touch any shared surfaces like handrails or elevator buttons.

12. Going to a nightclub: high risk

There is consensus among the experts that going to a nightclub is a very high-risk activity. Crowds, ultra-close contact, singing, sweating and inhibition-loosening alcohol are a potent cocktail of risk factors. When drinking, people become less compliant with rules, Miller says, and they may breathe heavier from the dancing — "which means more virus is being shed," he says. If there's an infected person in the mix, the virus can spread easily.

"This is a very high-risk situation for an outbreak, as we saw in South Korea just recently," says Karan, referring to an outbreak tied to several nightclubs and bars. "Don't go to bars or clubs right now."

What alters risk? Nothing makes this a good idea right now. If you want to dance, have a dance party at home with the people in your intimate circle. If it's a small outdoor gathering, dancing under the stars — 6 feet apart — would be much less risky too.

13. Going camping: low risk

"As far as summer activities go, this is least risky from a virus perspective," says Katz, of Georgetown. You're outdoors and isolated. Miller agrees — but he says that if you're going with a group, be sure you can trust your fellow campers. Have they been social distancing and following the guidelines? If not, they could be asymptomatic spreaders of the virus.

What alters risk? Of course, risks can creep in, depending on the particulars. "Are you camping in an isolated outdoor location with your family?" Katz asks — this is the lower-risk

scenario. It's more dangerous if you're at a crowded campground with a shared restroom and communal picnic areas, she says. "Sleeping in tents together with others [not from your household] can certainly be a setup for transmission," adds Karan.

Bottom line: The activity itself is low risk, but the people whom you'll be in close contact with during the trip could increase the hazard.

14. Exercising outdoors: low risk

Unless you're playing group sports, exercising outdoors is a good way to burn off steam while staying socially distant. Our experts agree that sports such as golf and tennis are safer than contact sports such as basketball and football. "I would personally avoid contact sports until we have a better sense of transmission risk here," Karan says.

And running? "If you're not on a crowded path where people are brushing past each other, then I think that's a great form of exercise right now," says Powers.

What alters risk? The more people involved in the activity, the higher the risk. It's possible to spread the virus when you're in close proximity to others — even if you're asymptomatic — so it's best to wear a mask if you can't stay socially distanced.

The risk depends on the sport. A game like basketball is tricky, Landon says. "You're touching the ball and you're going to be breathing in each other's faces," so she suggests playing only with people in your household. Tennis carries a much lower risk: "You're far apart on either side. That's definite social distancing," she says.

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